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ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY IN RURAL ALBERTA

by

LAUREN ANN JULIA SCHNIRER

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partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF EDUCATION.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY IN RURAL ALBERTA submitted by LAURIE ANN JULIA SCHNIRER in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

The intent of this research is to examine the relationship between sexual activity and background variables such as familial factors, drug usage, alcohol usage, smoking, career aspirations, grade point average and religiosity in a rural Alberta community. Similar Canadian and American research studies are included to compare and contrast adolescent sexual trends.

Of the 512 students that voluntarily participated, approximately 44% of the students were sexually active. Students that did not report being sexually active were found to be significantly higher academic achievers with post-secondary aspirations and partake in less self-destructive behavior (smoking, drugs and alcohol). Both parental marital status and parenting style were found to be statistically significant to reported sexual activity but there was no significant relationship between quality of parent and adolescent relationship and the teenagers sexual activity. As well, a relationship between open communication was statistically significant with the teenagers sexual activity. Religion and church attendance were not found to be statistically significant in relationship to reported sexual activity.

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Statement of the Problem

Adolescent sexuality has become a topic frequently discussed in 1990's among teenagers, their parents, the media, educators and health practitioners. The popular media illuminates many trends in this arena from the new virginity movement ("The Young and the Sexless", Sassy, Dec., 1995) to the new sexual revolution ("Lock up Your Sons, Saturday Night, Feb., 1996). Current Canadian information used by both academics and nonacademics is often based on the work of Bibby and Posterski (1992). From their nationwide survey, they report that 55% of teens have had sexual intercourse by the time they have graduated from high school. Other Canadian researchers substantiate this figure with the usual range between 50 to 60% (Fehlauer, 1992; Herold, 1984; King, Beazley, Warren, Hankins, Robertson, & Radford, 1988; Meikle, Peitchinis, & Pearce, 1985). Sex, in the context of adolescence, is much different than adult sexuality. With all the cognitive, emotional and physical changes that happen during adolescence, sexuality is often a source of anxiety and confusion, not only to the adolescent, but also to parents, educators and health workers. Typically the writers in the field tend to polarize this issue: those who see adolescent sexuality as a normal, healthy part of development and those who see it as an immoral or inappropriate part of adolescence. While this debate continues, the consequences of irresponsible sexual relations are seen throughout society. The study of adolescent sexuality, directly or indirectly, involves many issues.

Addressing adolescent sexuality issues is an acknowledgment that the teenager is moving away from childhood toward adulthood. It is a part of normal teenager development: the physical changes due to puberty and the intellectual/emotional changes. As Erikson (1968) proposed, adolescents are working toward an identity separate from their parents, becoming autonomous individuals. As they withdraw from their parents, a new social environment of peers becomes more important. These peer groups provide two important functions: they provide a group with which to try a new identity and a new source of emotional support (Brown, 1990). As well, a more intense need for intimacy develops, which permeates their friendships with both genders. Dating often is the next step. Initially, this involves both males and females interacting in group situations. These groups of teenagers offer an opportunity to practice interpersonal qualities that carry over to the one-on-one romantic relationships of dating. Coupled with these intellectual and social changes are the biological changes such as the growth of hair and maturing of genitals. All these developmental changes are instrumental in inevitably becoming mature sexual beings.

Even though adolescent sexuality is a normal part of maturation, it is not an easy issue to address and is often a problem. The consequences of sexual activity at this age are at the very least, life-altering and the very worst, life-threatening. Even the most responsible, mature teenager experienced changes once having decided to engage in sexual relations. Peer relationships may change (acceptance or disapproval); the relationship between the teenager and partner may change; and the teenager may view himself or herself differently. These are issues that are often overlooked when confronted with more serious social costs such as teenager pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Besharov and Gardiner (1993) summarized the harsh consequences of irresponsible sexual activity in the United States:

Abortion

About 40% of all teenage pregnancies end in abortion,

> Out-of-Wedlock Births
>
> Three-fifths of all teenager births are to single mothers,
>
> Welfare
>
> Seventy-seven percent of all teenage mothers are on social assistance within five years of birth of their first child,
>
> Diseases
>
> One out of six sexually experienced teenagers becomes infected with a sexually transmitted disease each year. The overall disease rate is due largely to the sexual activities of teenagers; sexually transmitted disease rates decline sharply with age (p.54-55).

Given the above information this researcher believes society is remiss if adolescent sexuality is not investigated and better understood. North American countries are often cited as leaders in industry, technology and resourcefulness. But nevertheless, our advanced society is still grappling with basic social problems among teenagers such as unwanted pregnancies and contracting preventable diseases.

Predictors of Initial Sexual Experience

There is no question that many adolescents are engaging in sexual activity. However, understanding why some teenagers choose to have sexual intercourse at a very young age while others choose to wait is not well explained in the literature. This is very much needed information: by better understanding which students may be pre-disposed to engage in early sexual activity, education and interventions can be better planned. Various theories have been developed to try to explain the predictors of the initiation of sexual activity. All of them have something to offer in way of explanation of this issue.

In Biological Theory, the onset of sexual relations is tied to the biological changes of puberty. The physical changes that occur from late childhood to the end of the second decade have been well documented (Brooks-Gunn & Reiter, 1990). Typically, puberty begins between ages 11-13 for girls and 12-14 for boys. Males experience the enlargement of testes and scrotum, pubic hair becomes pigmented, their penis lengthens, voice deepens, body parts grow and armpit and facial hair develops. Females initially go through their growth spurt, followed by breast buds developing, hips become rounder, vagina, labia and clitoris grows and pubic hair becomes pigmented. The mean age of the menarche is 12.75 with the ability to conceive usually 1 year afterwards.

These very apparent physical changes are accompanied with changes in the endocrine system. It is this system that mediates the interactions between genetic make-up and environmental factors (such as nutrition) to influence the physical changes and growth. It may be not so much the actual changes that affect the onset of sexual relations (although the "raging hormones" caused by increased level of testosterone are indeed a factor), but societal and individual perceptions of these changes. For example, a 11 year old girl may think she has to abandon her childhood activities, such as playing with dolls, after her menarche, if she now perceives herself a teenager. Even more conspicuous are elaborate puberty rites prevalent in some cultures: physical changes are viewed as a cultural event that mark a transition to adulthood. Hence, puberty propels a teenager toward adulthood in both physical and emotional ways.

Advocates of Social Learning Theory suggest that adolescents learn attitudes, values and appropriate behaviors in the presence of models;

family, peers or community members. Specifically, the modeling of early and/or extramarital intercourse or exposure to permissive sexual norms increases likelihood of adolescent intercourse. For example, having a mother or sister who was pregnant as a teenager and living in a non-intact family is associated with earlier initiation of intercourse (Crockett, Bingham, Chopak, & Vicary, 1996, p.92). Furthermore, social learning also extends to the symbolic modeling apparent outside a teenager's immediate environment. Athletes, film stars and books can all be very influential. For example, a young male may idolize a basketball player who is openly promiscuous and very successful. This athlete is modeling clear behavior and attitudes about sexuality which could be internalized by those who respect him.

A related theory that incorporates social learning principles is Social Class Theory in that the focus is the social class of the models and teenagers. The onset of sexual relations said to be related to social class, although the reason for this association is not clear. In reviewing the conflicting literature, it seems that the problems with this theory stem from the broad use of the term social class. “Social class” encompasses (and is measured) by many different variables such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), parents' education, parental occupation etc. Thus, it may be any one of these more specific variables that is a predictor of sexual activity, not the global social class.

Proponents of Social Control Theory believe that sexual intercourse is a form of norm-breaking or deviance. Being sexually experienced is seen as part of a syndrome of problem behaviors, such as substance abuse and truancy, that violate social norms regarding appropriate adolescent behavior. High sexual activity is assumed to be associated with weak attachment to parents and low involvement in conventional institutions such as church and school. For example, Luster and Small (1994) found that the highest sexual risk takers experienced less family closeness, engaged in more delinquent activities and were more likely to have a partner who used illegal substances during sexual intercourse. This theory is strongly supported in that almost every study a correlation between substance abuse and high rates of sexual activity was found. It would be easy, although erroneous, to conclude that sexual activity is another norm-breaking behavior in a pattern of deviance. That explanation does not account for the honor roll students or class presidents or school star athletes who begin sexual activity early.

Perhaps, instead of looking at deviant behavior in isolation, researchers should investigate the underlying commonalities. Hess and Short (1995) propose that personality variables such as impulsivity, rebelliousness, and the desire to take risks are to be considered. For example, Gottfredson and Hirschi in their General Theory of Crime (Lagrange, 1996) propose that low self-control is a universal cause of crime. This would help explain why some teenagers, given similar environmental predictors in their lives, are not sexually active while others are sexually active, if personality variables are a factor for norm-breaking behavior.

Researchers supporting Psychosocial Theory propose that the onset of early sexual intercourse is initiated because of inadequate social relationships or to counter feelings of low self-esteem. This poor psychological adjustment to adolescence and the environment are believed to leave teenagers with feelings of emptiness and loss. Sexual activity is then used to gain the intimacy they crave. Even though this view is commonly proported in the popular media, there is surprisingly very little empirical support for it (Holden, Nelson, Velasquez, & Ritchie, 1993; Morgan, Chapar, & Fisher, 1995).

Plan of Study

There is evidence to support (and sometimes refute) each of the above theories as they relate to adolescent sexuality but much more work needs to be done to investigate these relationships, both within a theory and between them. The following study focuses on the issues discussed in the social learning theory and social control theory. The factors to be investigated include background variables such as religiosity, educational aspirations, tobacco habits, alcohol usage, drug usage and parenting style. Measures of socioeconomic status such as parental occupation and income as discussed in the Social Class Theory were also to be incorporated in the study. However, when piloting the instrument, parents of the adolescents in the community felt that any information about them was invasive. It was decided that increasing parental support and sample size by removing the questions aimed specifically at identifying family socioeconomic status was more important than collecting data in that area. Hopefully, by gathering basic information about current adolescent sexuality attitudes and behaviors and investigating relationships with other factors in their life, a more accurate and comprehensive view of adolescent sexual activity can be achieved.

Intent

The format of this thesis is in keeping with a major goal in pursuing this research: that of providing sex educators and researchers with current, relevant information. It seems crucial to normalize the sexual experiences of adolescents. Students need to know basic information about other teenagers in order to make knowledgeable decisions about their own sexual behavior. Parents need information on the behavior of "typical teenagers" so that they can guide their own adolescents. Educators need the information to plan prevention and intervention programs. The grass-roots approach for the dissemination of the findings is deemed necessary in order to educate the front-line adolescent workers about the attitudes, behaviors and expectations of Alberta youth. This includes speaking at schools on the topic, running workshops for youth workers and publishing articles in more widely circulated and mainstream periodicals. In addition, by publishing the results of this research in academic journals, other researchers and clinicians can hopefully benefit. Thus, the following research questions will be addressed in the form of articles that will be submitted to various publications.

Research Questions

The focus of this thesis will be to answer the following questions:

1. Are current American adolescent sexual activity statistics applicable to Canadian and more specifically, Albertan teenagers? This question addresses an important underlying rationale for the initiation of this research. American studies are cited regularly in the popular media in Canada and of course, the America media from magazines to news programs are prevalent in our culture. It may be erroneous to assume that facts about American and Canadian teenagers are comparable. Some important differences are known. For example, it has been stated that the teenage pregnancy rate in the United States is twice the Canadian rate (Dworetzky, 1990). Netting (1992) also found a difference that Canadian youth repudiate safer sex practices compared to American youth and suggested that the Canadian youth's lack of regularly using condoms is perhaps because they do not see AIDS as a threat. Netting's suggestion though, is but one explanation; the irregular use of contraceptions by adolescents has been also attributed to other factors such as infrequent sexual

intercourse and lack of regular partner (Hyde, 1990). Another issue to consider is that the majority of American studies are tailored to address the United States' specific problems. For example, Forrest (1990) suggests that blacks in urban ghettos have higher levels of premarital sexual activity in the United States. Generalizing this conclusion to the Canadian black community may be unfair. It is difficult to find specific research on background factors of average Canadian adolescents and their sexuality. What does exist is mainly sampled from college students. And since only approximately 27 percent of Canadian youth go to college or university, presuming that the findings apply to all Canadian adolescents is problematic (Oderkirk, 1993).

2. Are sexually active teenagers different from non-sexually active teenagers in background and behavior? Parents, educators and even other teenagers often have perceptions of what a sexually active teenager is like. Some conjure up negative images of promiscuity, low self-esteem, dysfunctional family dynamic. Others believe it's a sign of maturity or popularity. Are there commonalities between teenagers

that are sexually active? Conversely, are there commonalities between teenagers that delay sexual activity? Once identified, the two groups can be compared and contrasted.

3. Researchers and educators view sex as an important variable in teenagers' lives because of dire consequences such as AIDS and pregnancy. Should parents, educators and researchers also be concerned because of the relationships between being sexually active and other destructive behaviors?

4. What messages would adolescents like to send to their community leaders (teachers, parents etc.) about dating and adolescent sexuality? As adolescents' explore their identities, become more independent, mature, they discover that they can be responsible and involved in decisions-making processes. This author believes it is extremely patronizing to dismiss their thoughts and opinions and then expect them to blindly follow adult instructions. While adolescents may not understand their motives for engaging in sexual activity, they certainly are an important source of information and provide endless amounts of speculations and opinions.

5. What is the profile of a typical teenager in a rural community? Although sexuality is the main focus of this research, the data is also a rich source of information about other parts of an adolescents life. Besides collecting information on sexual activity, factors explored include, but are not limited to the following: age, gender, religiosity, alcohol and drug usage, education, career aspirations and family background.

These questions are the focus of this research endeavor. However, much more data is being collected regarding dating attitudes, behaviors and expectations as part of an ongoing study. It is the hope of this researcher that this information will be used to plan better sex education programs both inside and outside of the school setting. Having knowledge of adolescent behavior is important, but understanding why and how they make their choices in sexual matters is key. Thus ultimate goal seems to be to understand the decision making process' surrounding sexual behavior in order to encourage and influence individual sexual responsibility.

Sample and Instrument

The sample consisted of 512 students, grade 9 to 12, who were attending secondary school (68% were high school students) in a rural Alberta community.

Data was collected using a pencil-paper questionnaire (see Appendix for copy of instrument). It was developed by the researcher based on previous research, on personal classroom and counseling experiences, and after consultation with other educators at the high school and university levels. Besides the straightforward sexuality questions, such as age of first intercourse and use of contraception, more emotional-laden questions were asked. The students were also given the opportunity and encouraged to respond freely to anything pertaining to their sexuality, sex education or the questionnaire. To increase honesty and ease student concerns about confidentiality, it was made clear that students could omit any question and once completed, each student placed his/her survey in a sealed envelope.

Overview of Chapters

This thesis consists of 5 parts: an Introduction, 3 papers to be published in various periodicals and a Summary chapter. The Introduction includes the statement of problem and intent of the research study. While all the questions in the above Intent of Research will be addressed, each paper focuses on specific topics tailored to address an appropriate audience. Paper #1 is a description of the rural adolescents, from their general beliefs in religion to their participation in alcohol and drugs to their sexual activity. As it is information that is most useful to school employees across Alberta, it will submitted to various main steam and widely circulated education publications. In Paper #2, the relationships between sexual activity and the background variables cited in the Plan of Study are explored. A continuum of sexual experience is used to further pursue and categorize each relationship. As this will be of interest to researchers and academics in this area, the paper will be submitted to academic journals. Paper # 3 is a summary of adolescent sexual trends using sexuality data from not only this rural sample but also a suburban sample collected using almost the same instrument (Fehlauer, 1992). The adolescents' sexual experience in these two Alberta communities are compared to each other and to the United States. As this has public health implications: from sexually transmitted diseases to teenager pregnancies, this paper will be submitted to a health periodical. In the last chapter the answers to the initial research questions are summarized,and adolescents' comments on sexuality in their community and in general are included. Also in the chapter is a critique of the study, especially the instrument. Lastly, as with any research, new ideas and directions arise during the process. These suggestions for further research will hopefully help to improve the next study.

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Adolescent Sexuality in Rural Alberta
Chapter 2 - Paper #1

A Portrait of Rural Adolescents

The popular media paints a grim picture of today's teens: delinquent adolescents stealing cars, teenage girls becoming mothers, suicidal adolescents copying rock stars. One might argue that these are American images from the American media and do not reflect the typical Canadian adolescent. Drive-by shootings and crack addiction may be an issue for some youth, however it seems that many adolescents may experience an altogether different life. In talking with teachers and parents in rural Alberta, many claimed that the media's perception of teenagers is only showing the atypical adolescents and their problems and does not seem representative of the Albertan adolescents in their classrooms and homes. Even though it sometimes seems to adults that teenagers are in a constant state of crisis, it is questionable that this may be no more than "typical" teenage angst. The intent of the following study was to investigate this dichotomy between media reports of adolescents and personal accounts of the typical teenager living in rural Alberta.

Background

There are two prevailing schools of thought regarding adolescence: it is either a time of anxiety and turmoil that causes upheaval in the life of the adolescent and family or it's a relatively stress-free period of development that has its own unique problems but is not chronically turbulent. These two diverging theories are often referred to as the "storm and stress" debate (see Mitchell, 1986). If one reads the newspapers or watch any talk show, it would be easy to conclude that teenagers are always on the verge of self-destruction. A variety of reasons why we misperceive this nature of adolescence have been offered: over interpretation of superficial signs of nonconformity, mass media sensationalism, generalization from samples of deviant adolescents and self-fulfilling prophecies (Mitchell, 1986). The "punker" in a rural classroom, with his shaved head and ripped clothing, could be no more tortured or alienated than the clean-cut captain of the basketball team sitting in the seat next to him. Both drank alcohol at week-end parties, both had part-time jobs, and both lived on farms and went to church on Sunday.

This Study

To gain a better sense of our rural teenagers, two colleagues (in Schnirer, 1996) gathered some background information from a rural community as part of an on-going adolescent sexuality study at the University of Alberta. Questions about religiosity, school, parental relationships, sexual behavior, career aspirations and drug and alcohol usage were included. The sample consisted of 512 students, grade 9 to 12, who were attending secondary school (68% were high school students). Seventy-five percent of the students had European ancestry and 6% had native Indian backgrounds. Forty-one percent live on a farm, 26% on an acreage, 26% in the central village and 2% on a reserve. All participation was strictly voluntary and consent was sought from both students and parents. Confidentiality was emphasized and students were free to omit any questions or opt out of the study; thus some of the reported percentages may not total one hundred percent.

Results and Discussion

Only 67% of the teenagers lived with both biological parents, a fact that is not surprising given that divorce is a part of today's society. The majority of teens (58%) characterize their parent(s) or guardian(s) as "not very strict", 34% think they are "strict" while 6% believe they are "very strict." As parent/adolescent relationships are often cited as a point of major conflict, it is interesting that almost 75% of the teens stated that they had a good relationship with both parents/guardians. A sign of open communication is further supported in that 72% of students had talked with at least one of their parents about sex.

Traditional religion apparently plays less of a role in these teens' lives than has been reported in the previous decade. Seventy-two percent of the teenagers stated they never or rarely went to church. Only 15.2% attended church or religious services at least once a week compared to 23% in a national survey conducted in 1984 (Bibby & Posterski, 1992). Students were also asked whether they generally considered themselves religious. Forty-four percent consider themselves not at all religious. Of the 12.3% that consider themselves very religious, 66% were females. Many teenagers indicated that though they were not traditionally religious, they considered themselves spiritual and moral: believing in a high power, not necessarily "God" and separate from a "church". Bibby and Posterski (1992) found similar findings in their national survey:

> Paradoxically, young people are having severe difficulty relating to organized religions precisely as they exhibit a strong interest in the things that religion has traditionally focused upon-- the supernatural, spirituality, meaning, morality, and ethics (p. 53).

Attitudes toward schooling were minimally assessed in two questions: did the students like school and/or participate in extra-curricular activities. Fifty-nine percent of the students thought school was "okay", approximately 20% liked school more than most of their friends or loved school while the remaining 20% indicated they didn't like school or hated it. Seventy-five percent of the students participated in at least some extra-curricular activities. After completing high school, 58% were planning on some sort of post-secondary schooling such as NAIT or university, 15% planned to get a job and 4% wanted to travel.

Areas of concern were also investigated: tobacco, alcohol, drug usage and sexuality. The usage rates as reported by the students in the community are presented in Table 2-1. Students reported that they most often drank at parties on the weekend. Sixty-five percent of the drinkers indicated they had

1 to 3 drinks in an average week, 15% usually had 4 to 6 drinks while 14%

Table 2-1

Percentage of Rural Adolescent Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug Usage in Rural Alberta

		Never or Quit	Occasionally	Regularly
Tobacco	males	43%	32%	25%
	females	45%	28%	27%
Alcohol	males	21%	55%	24%
	females	18%	66%	16%
Drugs	males	71%	17%	12%
	females	59%	30%	11%

had 7 drinks or more. More than twice as many males than females were included in the last category. Lastly, 15% of the students indicated they have used prescription or "over the counter" drugs for recreational or non-medical reasons.

Dating behavior was generally difficult to map. Many teens indicated that they didn't "date" anymore. A male and female either were "going together" or not and the outings usually consisted of groups of teens "hanging out." However, four categories of progressively more serious interactions were used in defining their dating behavior. Eighty-five per cent of the students indicated that they had at least one date, 79% had several dates, 66% have been in a steady relationship and 45% have been in a serious, committed, loving relationship. The sexual activity in this rural community consisted of the following facts:

- 44% of the students had experienced sexual intercourse;
- the mean age of first sexual intercourse was 14.45 years with very little variance between males and females;
- 52% of those reported to be sexually active had sexual intercourse more than 5 times, while 13% had sex only once,
- 39% of the sexually active had only one partner, 47% had 2-5 partners and 13% had more than 5 partners.

The level of sexual activity is slightly lower than is typically reported. In the last decade, the majority of American and Canadian studies have found that between 50% to 60% of adolescents had sexual intercourse by the time they graduated from high school. A noteworthy trend in this study and in a similar study in a suburban Albertan community (Fehlauer, 1992) was that students who decided to become sexually active did so before entering high school. Approximately 3 out of 4 students who were sexually active become so *before* high school. In Alberta, the topic of sexuality is covered in the health curricula from grades 4 through 9 as one of 5 themes. Parents maintain a right to exempt their children from the sex education classes if they choose. As a former teacher and researcher, and in speaking with students and parents, it seems that frequently the subject of sexuality is not covered thoroughly until the Career and Life Management (CALM) course in grade 11, which is designed to be taken two years after the mean age of first sexual intercourse. Parents and teachers of junior high aged students may be unaware of the sexual activity occurring at this age.

Conclusion

Given the above information, the average teenager in rural Alberta seems to get along with his/her parent(s), may not attend church but professes to adhere to a set of values, usually thinks school is "okay", plans to attend a post-secondary institution, parties on the week-end and partakes in both group and male/female relationships. Less than half of the students were having sexual intercourse. When reflecting on these results, the above description seems to be a more accurate portrait of the teens that filled our classrooms.

The majority of rural Alberta adolescents seem to be removed from the crack houses and gang activity we hear about in the media. It would be erroneous though, to believe that the "at risk" adolescent is non-existent in rural Alberta. There are still issues that must be addressed. While it would be beneficial to all if teens refrained from drugs, sexual activity, risky and self-destructive behavior, it seems that this goal of abstinence may be an unattainable dream. This fatalistic but realistic statement is not a sign of acceptance or defeat but acknowledgment of the given adolescent attitudes and behaviors. The students in this community reported that approximately 80% of these teenagers drink alcohol, 35% use illegal drugs, and 45% are having sexual intercourse. Many teachers have developed programs aimed jointly towards reducing the self-destructive behaviors of adolescents and teaching them needed skills and knowledge to make better decisions in all areas of their lives. Adolescents want the responsibility to control their own lives. Teenagers making their own decisions is not a bad idea, as long as they are taught how to make responsible decisions.

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Correlates of Sexual Activity and Background Variables in Alberta, Canada

It is generally agreed that between 50 to 60 percent of adolescents have had sexual intercourse by the time they graduate from high school. Adolescents are also starting their sexual activity earlier than in previous decades and with more partners (Besharov & Gardiner, 1993). However, statistics on the incidence of pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) among teenagers indicate that adolescents are not very responsible in the area of sexual activity.

The Canadian adolescent pregnancy rate was 44.1 per 1000 teenage females in 1989. (Statistics Canada as cited in Bibby & Posterski, 1992). More than 1 million teenage girls in the United States become pregnant each year (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1991). The consequences of pregnancies of teenage girls can dramatically change the lives of dozens of people. The teenagers who choose an abortion may carry the emotional and physical scars of the stress endured over the decision-making process and procedure itself. If a teenager decides to raise her baby, often her schooling becomes less of a priority. Half of teenage mothers quit school and go on public assistance (Kantrowitz, 1990). This perilous situation may be made more difficult as more children follow. And even if the adolescent father of the baby wants to participant in the parenting, it is difficult.

> The fulfillment of each child's potential requires a huge parental investment of time, energy, thought, caregiving, sensitivity, and money. It requires patience, persistence, understanding, and resilience in coping with adversity. All too many adolescents become pregnant only to find later that they are extremely ill prepared for the challenge of raising a child (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995).

Sadly, the children are often hindered in this situation. Due to poor nutrition and health care, family instability and inadequate parenting, children of teenage mothers are at a disadvantage from the beginning (Adams, Gullotta, & Markstrom-Adams, 1994; Nevid, Fichner-Rathus & Rathus, 1995). One must be cautious though, in reporting these discouraging trends as the above consequences of pregnancies are not the only possible scenarios.

Teenagers also show their lack of responsibility in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), as compared to adults. STD rates decline sharply with age (Besharov & Gardiner, 1993), but the diseases acquired in the teen years may be life-long problems with consequences ranging from infertility to AIDS. With the advent of AIDS, irresponsible sexual activity carries deadly consequences. The American Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that over three million teenagers, or one out of six sexually experienced teenagers, becomes infected with STDs each year (Besharov & Gardiner, 1993). The highest rates of gonorrhea, syphilis and chlamydia in the United States are among sexually active adolescents (Henggler, Melton & Rodrigue as cited in Balk, 1995).

The answer may seem clear to some: encourage abstinence and safe sex practices. But, unfortunately knowledge about contraception and STDs does not necessarily transfer into healthy behavior changes. For example, adolescents are notoriously poor users of contraceptives even though most students have had sex education courses (Nevid et al., 1995). We must take into consideration adolescent personal fables (the "it's won't happen to me" syndrome) that keeps the teenager detached from potential risks and consequences (Mitchell, 1986). Often social factors such as poverty, minority status, delinquency, truancy, dropping out of school and substance abuse may be a factor in assessing problems in adolescent sexuality (Crockett, Bingham, Chopak & Vicary, 1996; Luster & Small, 1994; Brewster, Billy & Grady, 1993; Lauritsen, 1994; Whitbeck, Conger, Simons & Kao, 1993). Added to the problem are pressures applied by parents, peers, sexual partners, teachers and the media (DiBlasio & Benda, 1994; Whitbeck, Simons & Kao, 1994; Whitbeck, Conger & Kao, 1993). And to further exacerbate the intricacies of this sexual activity are the normal adolescent struggles to form identity, to move from concrete to formal thought, to be treated as adults (Mitchell, 1986). Taken together, these variables help to illustrate the complexity of the influences upon adolescent sexual behavior and the need for more research in this area.

In trying to plan prevention and intervention programs, youth workers often turn to the literature for guidance. Much of adolescent sexuality research is American. In all studies of adolescent behavior a central question is whether the adolescents' learning process is inherent to the growth and maturational process of development toward adulthood or whether the experience are specific to the culture. There is little doubt that American culture is prevalent in Canada: of all the number one "favorites" cited by Canadian teenagers in national survey, from TV programs to world leaders, all but one was American (Bibby & Posterski, 1992). However, some research has cautioned researchers from making broad generalizations. For example, it has been documented that the teenage pregnancy rate in the United States is twice the Canadian rate (Dworetzky, 1990).

While acknowledging the complexity in the area of adolescent sexuality, the intent of this paper is to investigate the specific relationships between sexual activity and background variables such as religiosity, drug and alcohol usage and school activities in Canada. It seems clear that having knowledge of adolescent behavior is important, but that understanding why and how they make their choices in sexual matters is key to better prevention and intervention programs.

Background

Identified in the literature are many background factors associated with adolescents beginning their sexual activity. One must be cautious, though, in interpreting the reported relationships between the variables. One cannot assume one variable, such as being from a single parent family or having used street drugs, is the cause of the related variable, such as early sexual experience. Descriptive and correlational research about adolescents is important because a pattern of related variables emerge, which can help researchers and educators better understand the thoughts and behaviors of adolescents.

Several trends have become identified with the current research on adolescent sexuality. As generally reported, sexual activity increases with age and dating stage. As the teens pass through the dating stages, the likelihood of intimacy increases. Males expected more sexual involvement earlier, during the casual dating stage (Roche & Ramsbey, 1993). The age that the teens begin dating is a good predictor of overall sexual experience: teens who begin dating at a younger age are more likely to progress to sexual intercourse at an earlier age than those who began dating later (Brooks-Gunn & Furstenberg as cited in Nevid et al, 1995).

In almost every study, delinquency and drug or alcohol abuse were high predictors of early sexual activity (Luster & Small, 1994; White & DeBlassie, 1992). The "chicken or egg" debate is often problematic with these self- destructive factors. It is improbable a causal relationship exists between any of the variables. Perhaps underlying personality constructs, such as impulsivity or sensation-seeking, is the source of the problems (Lagrange, 1996). It is indeed difficult to isolate and define global personality traits. For example, studies have found that low self-esteem is not a predictor of sexual activity or contraception use (Luster & Small, 1994; Morgan, Chapar, & Fisher, 1995). The lack of empirical research to support the connection between self-esteem and sexual activity is contrary to the popular belief that building self-esteem among teenagers increases abstention rates of sexual activity. Longitudinal studies are needed to investigate further the relationships between the variables.

The type of familial environment also seems to be related to the onset of sexual activity. Coles and Stokes (as cited in Nevid et al.,1995) and Whitbeck, Simons and Kao (1994) found that children with separated or divorced parents are more likely to engage in intercourse, especially if a father figure is absent. Furthermore, the researchers suggest that this relationship may be due to the parents lacking credibility in advising their adolescents children given their own failed relationship or teenagers from single parent homes have greater opportunities for privacy, especially when the parent is employed. This author suggest that more caution is needed in interpreting the data. Perhaps the adolescents from single parent homes are more mature. One hesitates to imply causation when other alternatives may be just as possible.

The effect of social learning modeling can subsequently be seen in this area: teenagers with older sexually active siblings and mothers who were themselves teen mothers are associated with early sexual activity

(White & DeBlassie, 1992). In addition, Luster and Small (1994) found a relationship between a permissive parental style and early sexual activity. Although these are dependable predictors, once again, causation cannot be confirmed.

Cognitive factors are also important. Low educational achievement and lack of higher education goals is associated with greater sexual activity among males and females at an earlier age (Miller & Sneesby, 1988). School performance is often cited in this area. One must be careful in evaluating this relationship though, perhaps teenagers who do well in school come from a more stable and supportive family.

Lastly, social factors are to be considered since teens do not develop in isolation. Brewster, Billy, and Grady, (1993) suggest that the level of community religiosity reduces the risk of first coitus by increasing the psychic costs of early non-marital intercourse. Their suggestion is debatable: lack of religiosity is only a predictor of greater sexual activity. Usually, it was not a particular religion or partisan association that was significant but rather the extent to which an individual was committed to its teachings. As for peer influences, the research is contradictory. In self-report studies, teens often list peer pressure as a factor initiating a sexual relationship. Parents and the media are then worried that their child will be "led" into this activity.

> Yet it is often difficult to separate the influence of friends from the choice of particular friends in the first place. The relationship is often reciprocal: the sexual behavior of the adolescent helps determine the crowd he or she runs with; conversely, the sexual behavior patterns of the crowd influence the behavior of the individual associated with it. (Katchadourian, 1990, p.345)

Methods

Sample

Two schools from a rural community, approximately 100 kilometers from Edmonton, the capital city of Alberta, agreed to participate. The sample consisted of 512 students, grades 9 to 12. Sixty-seven percent lived on farms or acreages, 26% in the central village and 2% on an Indian reserve. Students, parents and school staff were all informed of the purpose of the research and its importance. All participation was strictly voluntary and written consent was sought from both students and parents. Over 95% of the students in the schools chose to participate. To increase honesty and ease student concerns about confidentiality, it was made clear that students could omit any question and once completed, each student placed his/her survey in a sealed envelope. Also, to discourage peers influencing each others' answers, the survey was administered during the same period of time to all the students who participated in the study.

Instrument

Data was collected using a pencil-paper questionnaire which consisted of five parts: background information, peer-expected dating behaviors, actual dating behaviors, sexual behavior and comments. It was developed by the researcher based on previous research (Fehlauer, 1992), on personal classroom and counselling experiences, and after consultation with other educators at the high school and university levels. There were three controversial areas that were purposely excluded from the survey (homosexuality and oral and anal sex practices) to increase parental and school approval of the questionnaire. Besides the factoral questions such as age of first intercourse and interest in school activities, more emotional-laden questions were also asked. In inquiring about their feelings and influences, a more accurate sense of adolescent sexuality can be developed. The students were also given the opportunity and encouraged to respond freely to anything pertaining to their sexuality, sex education or the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The sexual activity of adolescents encompass a wide spectrum of behaviors. In most research, being sexually active is usually defined as having had sexual intercourse once. And so, those students who just want to rid themselves of the virgin status and then return to celibacy are grouped with sexually active students who frequently have sexual intercourse with many partners. The author believes that engaging in intercourse once or twice is different from an ongoing sexual experience and adolescents with such different experiences should not be grouped and compared to those who report never having been sexually active.

Concerned with the above definition of sexually active, a Sexual Activity Rating scale was used to better understand the continuum of sexual activity. Students were assigned a rating based on their answer to four questions: number of partners, age at first intercourse, frequency of intercourse, and whether or not one had been pregnant (or their partner had been pregnant, in the case of males). Students were given a score from 0 to 3 on each of the dimensions and the combined score was their Sexual Activity Rating. This rating was then compared to the following background variables: age, grade in school, church attendance, religiosity, parental marital status, parenting style, relationship with parents, parental/student sex dialogue, life activities, post-secondary plans, grade point average, tobacco usage, alcohol usage, number of drinks per week, and Illegal drug usage.

All variables were measured by calculating the responses o a single survey question except for the life activities variable, which was an assessment of students' "busyness" and included their responses to questions about extra-curricular activities, chores, jobs and hours committed to school work. The statistical measure used was the chi-square test of association. Frequencies were cross-tabulated in a contingency table and the chi-square detected the relationships between the variables. Pagano (1990) reports that the Chi-square nonparametic test is the inference test most often used with nominal data in social psychology.

Results and Discussion

It is important to first examine the responses to the questions that constituted the Sexual Activity Rating scale. These descriptive statistics help to ascertain the overall sexual activity of the school community and point to areas of concern. Percentages have been rounded to the neared whole number and because students were allowed to skip questions, the sample n fluctuated. Of the total sample, 44% of the students indicated that they have had sexual intercourse. Seventy-three percent had used some sort of contraception at the time of their first sexual experience. Protection against pregnancy seemed more of a concern than STDs as only 50% of the students used a condom, which is deemed the only effective barrier against STDs.

The first question used in the scale was the number of sexual partners (See Table 3-1). A major concern is the risk of infection of STDs which increases with the number of partners.

Table 3-1

Number of Sexual Partners by Gender

	Male		Female		Total	
Number of Partners	n	%	n	%	n	%
never (abstinence)	134	57	151	55	285	56
one	35	15	53	21	88	17
2 - 5	47	20	59	22	106	21
> 5	18	8	11	4	29	6
total experience	100	43	123	45	223	44

Note. Total sample = 508.

Twenty nine of the 508 students who chose to answer this question reported having more than 5 partners: 13% of the sexually active teens. The number for males was 18%, meaning that almost 1 in 5 sexually active male has had more than 5 partners. Only 9 percent of sexually active females reported more than 5 partners. The gender differences suggest that the double standard still exists in number of partners. Having several partners may also lead to contraction of sexually transmitted diseases.

The second factor used was frequency of sexual intercourse (see Table 3-2). Males reported more of the one-time only sexual experience.

Table 3-2

Frequency of Sexual Intercourse by Gender

	Male		Female		Total	
Number of Occurrences	n	%	n	%	n	%
never (abstinence)	132	55	151	55	283	55
once	18	8	12	4	30	6
2 - 5 times	38	16	38	14	76	15
> 5 times	44	18	73	27	117	23
total (1 - 5+)	100	46	123	45	223	45

Eighteen percent of the "sexually active" males and 10 percent of the "sexually active" females had sexual relations only once. This illustrates the importance of creating the sexually activity rating scale to take into account a range of behaviors. Fifty-nine percent of the sexually active female students had sex more than 5 times, as compared to 44% of the sexually active males. In looking at both the frequency of sexual intercourse and number of partners combined, one sees different patterns emerge for males (more partners, less frequency), and females (fewer partners, more frequency).

The third component of the sexual activity rating scale is the age of first intercourse. In the literature authors propose that teenagers are having sexual relations earlier and this sample supports this premise. In table 3-3, the frequency distribution of the sexually active students are shown.

Table 3-3

Age at First Intercourse of Sexually Active Students by Gender

Age	Males		Females		Total		Cumulative Frequency
	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
13 or <13	28	28	29	24	57	26	
14	21	21	29	24	50	23	49
15	26	26	37	30	63	28	77
16	16	16	21	17	37	17	94
17	8	8	4	3	12	5	99
18+	0	-	3	2	3	1	100

Note. male n=99, female n= 123, total n= 222.

The mean age of first intercourse was 14.45 with little variance between males and females. Over 3 quarters of the sexually active students began their sexual experience by age 15. Fehlauer (1992) discovered similar findings in a suburban community in this province.

This age of initial sexual experience has vast implications for sex education in the school system. In Alberta, sex education is directed and controlled in the Health curricula (grades 5-9) and the Career and Life Management course (CALM) (grade 11). The sex education unit has been designed specifically to be broad, so that teachers and school boards can adapt the curricula to the needs and wants of the students and community. In speaking with students and parents, it seems that frequently the subject of sexuality is not covered thoroughly until the CALM course, which is designed to be taken two ears after the mean age of first intercourse. From a developmental perspective direct sexuality issues in addition to information about puberty changes (e.g. menarche) need to be addressed in late primary school and junior high school if students are expected to use the information to make healthy sexual decisions.

The last component of the sexual activity scale was pregnancy: whether a female had ever been pregnant or a male knew his partner to have been pregnant. Twenty seven female students indicated they are or have been pregnant: almost 1 in 4 of the sexually active females. The lower figures for the males may be due to their not being informed of a pregnancy or their denial of paternity. Approximately 10 percent of the sexually active males have known of their partner being pregnant. Students who had been pregnant (or their partner pregnant in the case of males) were given a score of 3 on the sexual rating scale; those who had not (or their partner had not) been pregnant received a score of zero.

The sexual activity rating for the students is presented in Table 3-4.

The absence of rating of 1 to 3 is due to the fact that those that were sexually active, just by being sexually active, regardless of age (1 point), have a partner (1 point) and have had intercourse at least once (1 point). When correlating with the background variables, it was decided to combine the sexual activity rating into 4 categories: 0, 4-5, 6-7, and greater than 8. This decision was based on the overall frequencies and mean and was used to

Table 3-4

Sexual Experience Rating of Students By Gender

Sexual Activity Rating	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total Sample (%)	Cumulative Frequency
0 (abstinence)	55	55	55	
1	0	0	0	55
2	0	0	0	55
3	0	0	0	55
4	7	4	4	59
5	4	5	5	64
6	12	13	13	77
7	9	9	9	86
8	2	4	4	90
9	4	3	3	93
10	< 1	4	4	97
11	3	2	2	99
12	< 1	1	1	100

Note. n=232 males and 274 females.

make the categories more meaningful as trends are more apparent.

The relationships between each variable and the sexual activity rating is presented in Table 3-5. Age, grade, tobacco usage, alcohol usage, and drug usage were all strong correlates with sexual activity for both males and females. Other overall significant relationships ($p < .05$) were parental marital status, parenting style, whether students had discussed sex with one

Table 3-5

Chi-square Analysis of Sexual Experience by Gender

Variable	Male		Female		Total	
	X^2	p=	X^2	p=	X^2	p=
Age	66.9898	.0000	53.8602	.0000	110.3540	.0000*
Grade	40.8238	.0003	29.0756	.0006	65.52333	.0000*
Church Attendance	7.04194	.9564	15.2030	.4368	12.27467	.6581
Religiosity	10.3031	.5893	5.90866	.9812	9.34973	.8585
Parents Marital Status	20.5430	.0148	39.8490	.0000	54.54291	.0000*
Relationship w/ Parents	8.14367	.2277	9.71498	.1371	10.46252	.1064
Parenting Style	16.6778	.1621	30.3208	.0025	31.82869	.0067*
Sex Discussion	23.4595	.0052	21.4016	.0109	32.28497	.0001*
Life Activities	10.1887	.1169	3.12534	.7929	5.22123	.5157
Post-secondary Plans	36.8471	.0054	34.2110	.0118	43.36036	.0007*
Grade Point Average	31.4632	.0016	24.7248	.0161	45.40915	.0000*
Tobacco Usage	53.4130	.0000	50.8414	.0000	90.63527	.0000*
Alcohol Usage	66.1516	.0000	30.1614	.0026	68.76159	.0000*
# of Drinks per week	61.0170	.0000	40.2282	.0004	76.44998	.0000*
Illegal Drug Usage	65.2120	.0000	64.1986	.0000	119.8257	.0000*

or both parents, post-secondary plans and grade point average. Each variable and the direction of the significant relationship is discussed in the following sections.

Tobacco, Alcohol and Illegal Drugs

Reported illegal drug usage, excluding prescription drugs used for recreational purposes, was the strongest correlate with reported sexual activity. The relationship being that those who smoked, drank alcohol or used illegal drugs tended to be more sexually active. Forty-six percent of those who have never used illegal drugs were not sexually active; 19% were sexually active. Two questions were used to assess students alcohol usage, frequency of drinking activities and number of drinks consumed per week. Both had a strong positive association with sexual activity, with 90% of those who never drink alcohol being not sexually active. Tobacco users were also more sexually active. Of those in the highest sexually active category (8+), 57% were regular smokers, while 16% didn't use any tobacco products.

Life Activities

The life activities variable was designed to assess student involvement in a myriad of activities: extra-curricular activities, chores, jobs (type and hours), homework and studying. Each student received a rating of

0 to 4 on each of the activities. This indicator of a student's "busyness" did not indicate any significant relationship. The maximum rating after combining the contributing variables was that of 24: two students were in that category. The teens were distributed normally with the mean busyness value of 11.98. As it was a combination of a variety of variables- chores, jobs, extra-curricular activities and school work, perhaps it was too broad. The adolescents that may be involved in after-school activities may not be the same group that focus on school work.

Family Factors

In reporting parental marital status, students were asked with whom they lived: both biological parents, step-parent(s), single parents or other guardians. Those who lived in a traditional two biological parent home were less likely to be sexually active (p=.0000). In total, 70% of non sexually active students lived with their biological parents while only 46% of the those with the highest sexually active rating (8+) lived with their biological parents (p=.0148). Results from the question assessing parental style, which the students rated on a 3 point scale from very strict to permissive, indicated that there was a association between parents being more permissive and higher rates of sexual activity. Students were asked whether they had a good relationship with one or both parent/guardian or not. The students' perception of their relationship with parents was not found to be statistically significant in relationship to sexual activity. It made little difference whether the teenagers got along with their parents or not as to how sexually active they were. Last, communication with parents about sexual issues was found to be statistically significant when related to sexual activity for both genders. Adolescents who reported that they had never discussed sexual issues with their parents tended to be more sexually active than those who reported they had discussed sexual issues.

Religion

Many research studies (White & DeBlassie, 1992; Nevid et al, 1995) show a correlation between an adolescents religiosity or church attendance and sexual activity. Although not many students attended traditional religious services, 24% of the students considered themselves "religious" or "more religious than most." Some of the adolescents commented in the margin of the questionnaire that although they were not religious, which they associated with a traditional institution, they were spiritual (see Table 3-6). However, the chi analysis for reported church attendance (X^2=12.27467, p=0.65813) and declared religiosity (X^2=9.34973, p=0.85853) did not

Table 3-6

Frequency and Percentages of Relationship Between Church Attendance and Sexual Activity

Sexual Activity Rating	Never Attend Church		Rarely Attend Church		Sometimes Go to Church		Attends Church Once/Week		Often Attends Church	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	125	25	80	16	47	9	25	5	10	2
4-5	25	5	10	2	10	2	3	<1	2	<1
6-7	50	10	33	6	22	4	5	1	1	<1
8+	34	7	12	2	12	2	2	<1	1	<1

Note. Total N=509.

detect any significant relationship with reported sexual activity.

School Variables

School grade level, as well as age, were shown to be positively related to adolescents' sexual activity. The summary data between school marks and sexual activity is illustrated in Table 3-7. There is a statistically significant relationship between high achievement and sexuality. Eighty-one percent of the honor students (over 80% GPA) were not sexually active. As well, those reporting high aspirations were also found to be inactive sexually: 78% of those students planning to attend university were not sexually active.

Table 3-7

Frequency and Percentages of Relationship Between School Marks and Sexual Activity

Sexual Activity Rating	<40%		40 - 49%		50 - 64%		65 - 79%		80 - 100%	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	1	<1	3	<1	63	12	165	32	57	11
4-5	0	-	3	<1	12	2	31	6	4	<1
6-7	0	-	3	<1	38	7	62	12	8	2
8+	0	-	3	<1	28	6	29	6	1	<1

Note. Total N=511.

These findings have important implications for those conducting sexuality research with college or university students. While not all honour students or those aspiring to college or university will actually attend such an institution, the results of the current study suggest that university and college students are a specialized group and may not reflect general trends among adolescents.

Conclusion

Statistically significant relationships were found between sexual activity and several of the background variables. Students that are not sexually active tend to be higher academic achievers with post-secondary aspirations and partake in less self-destructive behavior (smoking, drugs and alcohol). Parental marital status and parenting style were found to be related but there was no significant relationship between quality of parent and adolescent relationship and the teenagers sexual activity. As well, open communication, as measured by teenagers engaging in a dialogue about sexual issues with their parents, was associated with the teenagers sexual activity. Religion and church attendance were not found to be statistically significant in relationship to sexual activity.

Answering the research questions led not only to the answers, but more questions. Is religion not a factor in deciding sexual activity for Canadian adolescents? Are familial factors such as parents marital status or parenting style more influential than the daily relationship between teenager and parent? If "busyness" was operationalized differently, would it have been associated with sexual activity? It is the hope of this researcher that the answers to these questions will soon follow.

The ultimate goal of adolescent sexuality research should be to better understand the decision-making processes surrounding sexual behavior in order to encourage and influence individual sexual responsibility. Consider the comments of this seventeen year old female:

> Most of the people from my town think sex is a big deal. The more guys you sleep with, the better. It makes me sick to see my friend's baby suffering while she goes and drinks and sleeps around. I thought she would learn and grow up a bit after the baby was born. Well, I thought wrong. No matter how much you preach abstinence to teens, they still won't learn or stop what they are doing, even if it comes down to getting an STD like herpes or crabs.

The research literature seems to be validating the attitude and experience of this teenager: sex is used to gain attention/status, teenagers are not ready for the responsibility of becoming parents, abstinence is not even an option in the minds of some teens, irresponsible sexual practices are common. Perhaps researchers are slowly moving toward the above goal.

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Adolescent Sexuality in Alberta, Canada

Introduction and Background

Most researchers of adolescent sexuality agree that approximately half of adolescents have had sexual intercourse by the time they have graduated high school. While the rate has apparently plateaued after a 30 year incline, another trend has replaced it: teenagers seem to be engaging in sexual behavior earlier and with more partners (Besharov & Gardiner, 1993; Fehlauer, 1992).

These teens are at obvious risk in encountering the undesirable effects of teenage sexuality, more specifically pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. These two social problems are seen by the author to be a part of a larger concept of adolescent development, that of learning to act responsibly, to choose among desirable behaviors. Teaching responsibility in sexual matters could benefit individual teens and society at large. The cost of social assistance and health care for pregnant teens and teens with sexually transmitted diseases are enormous. For example, The American Congressional Budget Office calculated that about 50% of all teen mothers are on social assistance within one year of the birth of their first child; 77% receive it within five years (Besharov & Gardiner, 1993).

In all studies of adolescent behavior a central question is whether the learning process a certain group of adolescents are experiencing is inherent in the growth and maturational process of development toward adulthood or whether the experiences are specific to the culture. Canadian researchers have difficulty answering this question because of the tremendous influence American culture has in Canada. Also, a plethora of American studies are regularly cited, assuming that the two populations are alike. Many aspects of adolescent sexuality may be similar between the two countries. Both Canadian and American studies over and over confirm that the sexual activity rate is between 50 to 60%. However, differences do occur. It has been suggested that the teenage pregnancy rate is twice as high in the United States as in Canada (Dworetzky, 1990).

And so, being concerned with the irresponsible sexual decisions-making of some teens and not having the Canadian data needed to better understand these issues, various studies have been undertaken in the province of Alberta, Canada. Throughout the paper, various comparisons to

American data has been used to compare, contrast and provoke thought.

Methods

Two communities, one rural (Schnirer, 1996) and one suburban (Fehlauer, 1992), participated in the current project. The suburban high school sample consisted of 228 students from grade 10 to 12. Thirty-three percent lived in a rural setting (acreage or farm) while 67% lived in the suburban town community (on the outskirts of the city of Edmonton, population approximately 600 000). The rural sample consisted of 512 students, grades 9 to 12. Sixty-seven percent lived on a farm or acreage, 26% in the central village and 2% on a Native reserve. All participation was strictly voluntary and written consent was sought from both students and parents. Over 95% of the students in both communities chose to participate. To increase honesty and ease student concerns about confidentiality, it was made clear that students could omit any question and once completed, each student placed his/her survey in a sealed envelope.

Data was collected using a pencil-paper questionnaire and follow-up interviews. The same questionnaire, with minor revisions, was used in both situations so as to standardize the information for comparisons between groups. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on previous research, on personal classroom and counseling experiences, and after consultation with other educators at the high school and university levels. There were two controversial areas that were purposely excluded from the survey: homosexuality and oral/anal sex practices. This decision was made to increase parental and school approval of the questionnaire. Besides the straightforward sexuality questions, such as age of first intercourse and use of contraception, more emotional-laden questions were also asked. In inquiring about their feelings and influences, a more accurate sense of adolescent sexuality was developed. Lastly, the students were given the opportunity and encouraged to respond freely to anything pertaining to their sexuality, sex education or the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Dating Behavior

Trying to investigate and understand relationships in the period of adolescence can be complicated. In talking with teens, dating is a antiquated idea. Usually a guy and girl are either "going together" or not and they do not date but "hang out" in couples and groups. Nevertheless, four specific courtship stages were used and the teens seemed to understand the concepts. The reported dating behavior of the students was systematic. Generally, the intimacy level increased by both courtship stage and grade. The differences between the male and females in the two communities is illustrated in Table 4-1. For the first two courtship stages, the students reported very similar behavior, however there is a drop in the highest intimacy level for the last two courtship level. Fifty-six percent of the suburban sample has had intercourse while going steady as compared to 36% of the rural students. The percentage of students engaged in intercourse while in a committed relationship is even more pronounced: 85% of the suburban students compared to 61% of the rural students. Initially, the difference was thought to be because the rural sample had more younger students (grade 9). However, even when removing the grade 9 students, the percentages only increase from 36% to 44% and 61% to 69%. The causes of the difference in reported behavior between students in the two communities is unknown, but the fact that differences are evident seems reasonable given the myriad of variables thought to influence sexual decision making among adolescents.

Table 4-1

Percentage of Respondents indication their dating Behavior by Intimacy Level, Courtship Stage and Community

	Community						
	Suburban[1]			Rural[2]			
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	Total
On First Date	n=100	n=113	n=213	n=201	n=229	n=430	n=643
Holding Hands	91	84	87	95	92	93	91
Kissing	86	81	84	91	86	89	87
Necking	61	51	56	61	54	57	57
Light Petting	40	30	35	46	38	42	40
Heavy Petting	21	11	15	24	11	17	16
Intercourse	14	8	11	13	7	10	10
After Several Dates	n=88	n=95	n=182	n=182	n=220	n=402	n=584
Holding Hands	98	99	99	95	96	96	97
Kissing	98	100	99	93	95	94	96
Necking	90	89	90	82	81	82	84
Light Petting	69	73	71	74	65	69	70
Heavy Petting	43	32	37	48	29	38	38
Intercourse	27	15	21	27	13	19	20
When Going Steady	n=76	n=81	n=157	n=145	n=192	n=337	n=494
Holding Hands	99	100	99	97	100	99	99
Kissing	99	100	99	97	99	99	99
Necking	99	98	98	91	90	91	93
Light Petting	87	91	89	86	83	84	86
Heavy Petting	76	80	78	68	52	59	65
Intercourse	58	54	56	42	31	36	42
When in A Committed Relationship	n=25	n=40	n=65	n=85	n=143	n=228	n=293
Holding Hands	100	100	100	96	100	99	99
Kissing	100	100	100	99	100	99	100
Necking	100	100	100	94	94	94	95
Light Petting	96	100	98	94	92	93	94
Heavy Petting	96	95	95	82	76	79	82
Intercourse	84	85	85	61	62	61	67

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[1] Fehlauer, 1992.

[2] Lavin, Hess & Schnirer, 1996.

Comparative American data is lacking in this specific area of comparing dating behavior by intimacy level and courtship stage. Adams, Gullota and Markstrom-Adams (1994) cite results from a similar study on Australian adolescents. Necking was practiced by 47% of couples after the first date, 82% after several dates, and 88% during the going steady stage of courtship. The findings from the Australian study are from 5 to 10% below the Alberta results.

Sexual Activity

Of the rural sample, 44% of the students reported having had sexual intercourse. Reported sexual activity was also broken down by grade: 26% of grade 9 students have been sexually active, 39% of grade tens, 54% of grade elevens and 69% of grade twelves. The suburban sample was slightly higher with 56% of the students reported to have had sexual intercourse: 48% of grade 10 students have been sexually active, 64% in grade eleven and 57% in grade twelve. Perhaps the contrast in dating behavior above (fewer rural students engaging in sexual intercourse in the later courtship stages compared to the suburban students), helps explains the 10% difference between the rural and suburban sample.

In comparison, the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services and Public Health reported that 40% of grade 9 students, 48% of grade 10 students, 57% of grade 11 students and 72% of grade 12 students were sexually active (Leeming, Dwyer & Olivier, 1996). The trend of increased sexual activity with increased age was as expected, except for the suburban students in grade twelve. Fehlauer (1992) offers this explanation as to why the suburban grade 12 students did not correspond with the linear pattern: "More than one-third of the grade twelves, 36% of those surveyed, became sexually active at the ages of sixteen and seventeen, while only 17% of the grade elevens indicated similar behaviors" (p. 105). The average age of first intercourse for the different grades is extremely helpful in explaining the sexuality rates.

The mean age of first intercourse was 14.45 in the rural community and approximately 14.92 in the suburban community. For both samples, there was very little variance between males and females. As aforementioned in the introduction, it seems students are beginning sexual relationships at a younger age. This is startling obvious in Table 4-2: 1 in 4 males and 1 in 5 females that were sexually active, have had sexual intercourse, by age 13. Approximately 3 in 4 students who are sexually active began having sex by age 15. In comparison, the mean age of first intercourse in the United States was 14.9 for males and 15.9 for females. (Hyde, 1990). This is crucial knowledge for all professionals working with

Table 4-2

Age of First Intercourse of Sexually Active Students

	Males		Females		Total	
Age	%	Cum. %	%	Cum. %	%	Cum%
13 or <13	25		19		22	
14	21	46	24	43	22	44
15	25	71	32	75	29	73
16	21	92	17	92	19	92
17	7	99	6	98	7	99
18+	1	100	2	100	1	100

Note. Both Rural (Schnirer, 1996) and Suburban (Fehlauer, 1992) sample combined.
Males n=165, Females n=182, Total n=347.

early adolescents/junior high students. The sex education that accompanies high school courses, such as Career and Life Management (CALM) in Alberta, is too late for the majority of sexually active students.

Beginning a sexual relationship can be a life altering experience. When examining adolescent feelings about their first experience, little difference between the suburban and rural students was reported with two exceptions: 11% of the rural girls felt "raped" compared to 2% of the suburban girls and 15% of the rural girls felt "betrayed" while only 3% in the suburban sample felt that way. Overall, 41% of the students felt "wonderful", 38% felt "loved" and 35% felt "worried." The most clear pattern though, was the differences between the genders (See Table 4-3). When the feelings were arranged into positive or negative groups, the female percentages for the negative feelings were approximately double the male percentages. The trend was reversed for the positive responses, with exception of "loved".

Table 4-3

Frequencies and Percentage of Adolescent Feelings About First Intercourse by Gender in Alberta

	Male[a]		Female[b]		Total[c]	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Negative Responses						
Guilty	21	13	51	28	72	21
Afraid	24	14	80	44	104	30
Raped	1	1	14	8	15	4
Anxious	35	21	29	16	64	18
Worried	36	21	86	47	122	35
Betrayed	1	1	20	11	21	6
Hurt	1	1	42	23	43	12
Positive Responses						
Wonderful	91	54	54	30	145	41
Stimulated	93	55	32	17	125	36
Loved	50	30	83	45	133	38
Mature	53	32	44	24	97	28
Fulfilled	61	36	28	15	89	25
Excited	91	54	47	26	138	39
Others	18	11	37	20	55	16

Note. Both rural (Schnirer, 1996) and Suburban (Fehlauer, 1992) sample combined
[a]n=168, [b]n=183, [c]n=351.

Nevid, Fichner-Rathus and Rathus (1995) found this experience to hold true for American youth also and surmise that this may have cultural roots.

> "Negative emotional consequences of first intercourse may more closely reflect cultural norms or standards than the act itself. Perhaps this explains why women raised in a more sexually restricted culture, like the United States, were more likely to experience negative emotional reactions such as guilt, fear, and anxiety than their Swedish counter-parts who were raised in a society that is more tolerant of sexual experimentation, especially for women" (p.410).

This quotation could be used to suggest that American and Canadian youth share a similar culture. While this may explain some of the female's negative feelings in a general sense, it would be dismissive not to look at more specific variables.

In trying to understand the gender differences, the author probed the students about the initiation of sexual intercourse (See Table 4-4) and pressure to be sexually active. If the females felt negatively about their first experience, it may be hypothesized that there may be an element of coercion or peer pressure. Overall, over 50% of the students reported that the decision to engage in sexual intercourse was a decision made together with their partner. And while almost 40% of females reported that their partner

Table 4-4

Frequency and Percentage of Initiations of Sexual Intercourse by Sex in Alberta, Canada

	Male		Female		Total	
	n=167	%	n=183	%	n=350	%
Self	13	8	6	3	19	5
Partner	36	22	71	39	107	31
Both	101	60	93	51	194	55
Can't Remember	17	10	12	7	29	8

Note. Both rural (Schnirer, 1996) and Suburban (Fehlauer, 1992) sample combined.

initiated sexual activity, it would be erroneous to see this as substantial proof of unwanted sexual activity. Second, 45% of the rural and 31% of the suburban students felt pressure to become sexually active, whether it is from friends, partners, or television shows. There was very little variance between the male and female respondents. It is extremely disheartening to know that between 1 in 3 and 1 in 2 students are experiencing extra stress when making this decision to become sexually active. American studies on courtship violence found that 22.3% of college students and 13.1% of high school students admitted to some form of violence ranging from rape to physical or emotional abuse (Adams et al, 1994). Youth workers might want to address this issue by focusing more on communication and decision making skills to help young people better cope with the conflicts that arise.

Last, students were questioned about use of contraceptives on their initial sexual experience (See Table 4-5). Because withdrawal is an unreliable method, it was not considered a contraception for this study. While over 70% of the students used some sort of birth control the first time they had intercourse, the use of condoms by only 50% of the students means that half of the students had no means of protection from sexually transmitted diseases. The American Centers for Disease Control announced that one out of six sexually experienced teenagers becomes infected with STDs each

Table 4-5

Contraception Method for Sexually Active High School Students at the time of their Initial Sexual Experience

Birth Control Method	Suburban[1] (%)	Rural[2] (%)
None Used	16	22
Withdrawal	13	3
Spermicide or Diaphragm	3	0
Birth Control Pill	21	6
Condom	47	50
Multiple Methods	0	17
Total	71	73

[1] Fehlauer, 1992; [2] Schnirer, 1996.

year (Besharov and Gardiner, 1993). American data on the first time an adolescent has sexual intercourse is very similar: 77% used some sort of contraception (Nevid, Fichner-Rathus & Rathus, 1995).

When investigating the pregnancy rate in the rural Alberta community, it seems that the use of contraception was not at all consistent: nearly 25% of the sexually active females have been pregnant and approximately 1 in 10 of the sexually active males knew of having made a girl pregnant. The American adolescent pregnancy rate has been well documented. It is estimated that one adolescent female in ten will conceive which amounts to about 1 million teenage pregnancies (Besharov & Gardiner, 1993; Adams et al., 1994). This is comparable to our Canadian rural sample if we consider the entire female sample instead of only examining the sexually active students.

Conclusion

The average Canadian teenager's sexuality in Alberta can now be tentatively summarized. One in two are engaged in a sexual relationship. He or she is likely to begin a sexual relationship before high school. The initial experiences are usually negative for females and positive for males. Over 70% of the sexually active students claimed to use contraceptives during their first sexual experience. However, 1 in 10 females may be expected to become pregnant.

One of the overriding concerns was to attain Canadian data to ascertain if one can generalize American adolescent sexuality research to the Canadian teenager. On almost every measure that had data from similar studies, the adolescents from the two countries were alike. One must be careful though, to henceforth use each countries data interchangeably. There are problems and issues that are still specific to each country. For instance, many American studies have remarked on adolescent sexuality differences among different races. (Lauritsen, 1994; Coker, Richter, Valois, McKeown, Garrison & Vincent, 1994). It is these specific issues that researchers must be aware when applying the research from one country to the other.

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Loose Ends

This concluding chapter consists of 2 parts: findings of the initial research questions in the introductory chapter with student comments that provide ancillary support, and implications for further study as a critique of the instrument is offered as well as research suggestions that materialized from this study. As research questions 1, 2, 3 and 5 were addressed directly in the preceding papers, this chapter will more thoroughly focus on question 4, student comments.

Research Findings

1. Are current American adolescent sexual activity statistics applicable to Canadian and more specifically, Alberta teens?

One of the overriding concerns was to attain Canadian data to ascertain if one can generalize American adolescent sexuality research to the Canadian teenager. On almost every measure that had data from similar studies, the adolescents from the two countries were alike: age of first intercourse, feelings about first intercourse, use of contraception (see Chapter 4). One must be careful though, when making generalizations about the similarities of adolescents and their sexual behavior in the two countries. There are problems and issues that are still specific to each country. For instance, many American studies have remarked on adolescent sexuality differences among different races. (Lauritsen, 1994; Coker, Richter, Valois, McKeown, Garrison & Vincent, 1994). It is these specific issues that researchers must be aware when applying the research from one country to the other.

2. Are sexually active teens different from non-sexually active teens in background and behavior?

Statistically significant relationships were found between sexual activity and several of the background variables (see Chapter 3). Students that did not report being sexually active tend to be higher academic achievers with post-secondary aspirations and partake in less self-destructive behavior (smoking, drugs and alcohol). Parental marital status and parenting style were found to be related to reported sexual activity but there was no significant relationship between quality of parent and adolescent relationship and the teenagers sexual activity. As well, open communication, as measured by teenagers engaging in a dialogue about sexual issues with their parents, was significantly associated with the teenagers sexual activity. Religion and church attendance were not found to be statistically significant in relationship to reported sexual activity.

3. Should parents, educators and researchers be concerned because of the relationships between being sexually active and other destructive behaviors?

The findings supported the view that there is a positive relationship between norm-breaking behavior such as drinking alcohol, using illegal drugs and smoking and adolescent sexuality. However, as aforementioned, causation cannot be proved: it is impossible to conclude whether adolescents partaking in deviant behaviors tend to then be more sexually active or do sexually active adolescents partake in other norm-breaking behavior. It is the view of this researcher that underlying personality traits that are factors in both types of behavior, such as impulsivity and sensation seeking, should be further investigated.

4. What messages would adolescents like to send to their community leaders (teachers, parents etc.) about dating and adolescent sexuality?

The student comments in the last part of the survey (Part 5) provided much needed indications of adolescent beliefs, attitudes and behaviors in the area of adolescent sexuality. It is important as researchers to not only see the adolescents as statistical data but also as credible sources of information in themselves. All the comments for each of the six questions in Part 5 were gathered and through qualitative analysis methods, themes emerged. The following section is a summary of the open-ended answers provided by the students for each of the questions. As the comments were not addressed in the papers, much more detail will be involved in this section to try to capture the essence of the students' perspectives.

Part Five - Student Comments

Students were encouraged to respond to the six open-end questions and measures were taken to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. The following answers show the continuum of adolescent opinions in the area of sexuality.

i. Going Steady

The first question in the comments section of the survey provided help in defining what an adolescent relationships in the rural community. In the question, students were asked to explain what "going steady" means. It was apparent that some of the terminology was not current. In talking with teens, dating is an antiquated idea. Usually a guy and girl are either "going together" or not and they do not date but "hang out" in couples and groups.

"*No one using the word "steady" anymore. It's the 90's*" (male,16[§]) " *People don't "just see each other" they "go out" from the very beginning (go steady) and if they don't like it then end it.*" (female, 14) Nevertheless, four specific courtship stages were used by the researcher and the teenagers seemed to understand the concepts. The comments in regard to this question could be grouped into two types with a combination of the two types also evident. Some students explained it with a time factor, although there was no general consensus as to the amount of time needed to go steady. Everything from one month to 8 months was offered. It would be interesting to probe further how they arrived at such numbers. The other type of answer was a description of the relationship, time was not the issue but quality of bond or stage of intimacy.

- "*Going steady means you love and care for that person and only see them." (male,17)*
- *"Going steady to me means that there are two people that feel strongly about each other who want to move just beyond the "just friends" stage but has not developed into a love-making committed relationship." (male, 17)*

[§] To ensure confidentiality, only gender and age is used as source for comments.

- *"Spending time with someone of the opposite sex you care greatly about and respect" (male, 15*)

A few students wrote about shared activities. These teenagers seemed to describe a relationship as an accelerated version of a good friendship.

- *"frenching, holding hands, walking, talking" (female, 15)*
- *"Going out with a partner for someone to be around with or having a companion to have some fun with (Dances, movies).*" (male, 16)

Of course, there were descriptions that were a combination of a time factor and the intimacy level. Since developing an intimate relationship takes time, it's curious that not more adolescents combined the two. *"Not necessarily being in love but when the majority of your time is spent with this person and you've been together over 2 months." (female, 17)*

There was a wide variety of answers to this question. All people, not just teens, attach different meanings to behavior and have personal agenda's. To define such an ambiguous act as "going steady" is nearly impossible. However, the goal of this question was not to attain a consensus in answers, but rather to ascertain the spectrum of opinions.

ii. How long do you think a person should go with someone before becoming sexually active?

It is the hope of sex educators that sexual activity involves some forethought. At the least, students should have contraceptives to prevent STDs and unwanted pregnancy in those "it just happened" circumstances. Equally important though, is helping students to think about the emotional consequences of becoming sexually active. Do the teenagers feel ready for a sexual relationship? Do teenagers discuss contraception and past sexual activity with his or her partner as part of being sexually responsible? Have teenagers considered how the relationship might change by becoming sexually active? As sex invariably brings a higher emotional intimacy for most teens, there should be a foundation of trust and openness already established. Some adolescents dismiss the significance of this initial foundation or perhaps, are not aware of it's importance. This is certainly apparent in the comments. Once again, the answers could be grouped into two themes: time and intimacy level.

The time needed in a relationship before engaging in sexual activity ranged from one week to years. Several students indicated 3 months, 5-6 months and 8-9 months. The rest of the students provided a more emotional time line, usually mentioning that it depends when they feel ready. Consider the following students' remarks:

- *"That depends on the person. when you meet the right person, you'll just know it's right" (female, 16).*
- *"I believe a very long time, long enough to know them, get AIDS tests, talk about birth control and be very close" (female, 15).*
- *"... till they are sure it's what they want. If they can both look themselves in the mirror the next day and still like themselves" (female, 16).*
- *"This really depends on who the person is, if it was a friend before and you both feel comfortable then no reason not too. A stranger should wait longer (female, 19).*

The comments seem to indicate that it's a very individual decision, depending on many variables such as familiarity with partner, trust, communication and respect. However, perhaps the teens are telling teachers, educators and researchers what is appropriate considering 10% of the sexually active students have had sex on a first date. Either those students are on an accelerated intimacy plan or the preparation to have sexual relations is not an issue with them. As aforementioned, sexual knowledge does not equal changes in behavior. Intellectually, a person might know that their actions are irresponsible or irrational and yet still choose to act.

iii. Do you now, or have you in the past, felt any pressure to become sexually active?

One hears a great deal in the media about teen stressors. Parental pressure to excel at school and other activities such as sports or music. It is especially frustrating for all involved when the teens' life goals conflict with parental expectations. There is often an implicit directive to follow a parental life plan. As teens progress through adolescence, families becomes less influential (although still involved) and are replaced by peers (Brown, 1990). Peer pressure is a common topic in the popular media. There have been sensationalized cases of teens committing horrendous crimes in a type of group frenzy, attributing an implicit peer pressure for their actions. Peers may become very influential. As adolescents are just starting to explore identities, their "sense of self" is very malleable and vulnerable to outside pressure. Peers provide the barometer of what is acceptable or not to be the type of person they aspire (be it positive or negative). Last, there is the overall societal pressures that are directly and indirectly guiding our youth. The community milieu sends messages that can either inspire or defeat teen aspirations.

Given the potentially overwhelming amount of pressure from the above sources, it is not surprising that some student's feel pressure in the area of sexuality. Although there was no significant relationship between sexual activity and feeling pressured to have sex (X^2=7.74346, p=0.25751), approximately 48% of males and 45% of females reported to have felt pressured to begin a sexual relationship. Those who had reported feeling pressured were then asked to expand on the sources of the stress. Students reported friends as often as partner in causing pressure.

- *"My friends all were sexually active before me so I felt left out when they talked about sex" (female, 15).*
- *"My best friend was sexually active very young and encouraged me too. But when I did become sexually active it was completely my choice, I had been with the same boyfriend for a year (though I seemed young now). Up until my boyfriend and I did, he pressured me quite a bit, but again I did it under my own choice" (female, 18).*
- *"My friends had had sex and they would bug me about being a virgin" (female, 17).*

While the motive for a sexual partner to pressure is obvious (sexual gratification, emotional intimacy), the cause of friends' involvement in a teen's sexual affairs is more elusive.

iv. Do you now, or have you in the past, felt any pressure to abstain from sex?

Peer or parental pressure is almost always assumed to be negative, especially if one believes the popular media. This is a false assumption. The disapproval of adolescent sexual relationships helps to prevent the harsh consequences of irresponsible sexual practices. Abstinence is the only 100% effective way to prevent pregnancy and diseases. School staff, parents and youth workers try to impart this important fact to young people. Thus, it is not surprising that 29 percent of males and 47 percent of females have felt pressure to abstain. Considering that females feel more pressure to abstain from sexual activity than the males might indicate that the double standard is still intact.

The most frequent answer to who or what was the source of pressure was parents and diseases. Parental influence in this area is both explicit and implicit, by directly speaking about sex to their children *("My parents always told me not to have sex until I was married*" female, 15) and by raising well-rounded, informed children, respectful of themselves and others ("*My* *upbringing helps me to be careful about and with my body*" female, 17). That teenagers see the threat of diseases and pregnancy as being cause for concern is encouraging. These students are showing some thought for the future, not normally a strong trait for the egocentric adolescent.

- *"The chance of catching any STD and the large scare of AIDS. One other pressure is the possibility of pregnancy and that is not what any teen needs" (male, 17).*
- *"The scare of diseases and seeing my friend who has a baby sleep around like there's no tomorrow. There is no life for her" (female, 17).*
- *"So many people lately are getting pregnant, getting AIDS, or STD's. It's too scary to have sex now a days. I'm going to wait till I get married before I have sex with someone. Then I'll know that I'll love that person very much and I know it will be safe because I will be a virgin"* (female, 14).

v. Do you think it is realistic to expect teenagers to practice abstinence?

Forty-two percent of males and 41% of females believe it is realistic to expect teenagers to abstain from sexual relationships. This is contrary to the usual teen vernacular: they are going to have sex whether adults approve or not. The almost 60% of the adolescent's who did not believe it is realistic for teens to abstain from sexual relationships offered these comments:

- *"Most teenagers will do what they want. telling them not to will only make it worse" (female, 16).*
- *"Many of the teachers and parents (my step-father included) say "Don't have sex, it's bad" and when you ask them how old they were when they started they do not answer. They are being hypocrites. They shouldn't expect teens to practice abstinence when they never, and even if they did, their teen doesn't nose into when they have sex. So I don't think the teacher, counselor, parent should nose into the teens business"* (female, 16).

Other teenagers agree that it's unrealistic to expect abstinence, thus educators should instead focus on imparting knowledge so adolescents can make wiser decisions. There are varying levels of responsibility in becoming sexually active and while those that advocate abstinence may not approve of teens having sexual intercourse, they should also not deny it is going on. Acceptance does not equal approval. Many students made that very point:

- *"...it's not going to happen. A lot of teenagers have serious ongoing* *relationships that last for years. Sex is a part of life. I'm 15 and have been seeing the same guy for over a year. Parents think that teenagers don't know what love is but if it isn't love then what is it? Teenagers need to know how to protect themselves from the dangers of being sexually active, not just "don't have sex!" (female, 15).*

- *"They have to accept the situation. Talk to your parents before something terrible happens like the girl is pregnant or they have an STD. Make sure they know about the methods to protect themselves. But don't push on them that it's all right to have sex just let them make their own decisions" (female, 15).*
- *"Because most of the teenagers won't practice abstinence, parents should just encourage safer sex" (female, 17).*

Even though more than 40% of students did believe abstinence was attainable, very few actually explained why they thought that way in the comments. These two students offered physical and emotional suggestions.

- *Yes, because there are many STD's and pregnancy's going around and happening. Teenagers should take more care in what they are doing and realize what they can get!"* (female, 16).
- *"They should expect us to be responsible and grown up. Teenager*

> *should practice abstinence because they cannot handle the consequences if something wrong happens"* (male, 17).

vi. General Comments

The most varied comments were in the last portion where students wrote about issues unprompted. It was here that the teens voiced their opinions on matters that were important to specifically them. Subjects ranged from societal views of sex to individual problems.

There were several students who commented on how our society and adults view sex. There are two schools of thought in this matter: sex is a natural, healthy part of human development or sex is a reckless (or sinful) act that must be controlled. Many students wanted to clarify that they view sex as a healthy, normal part of growing up and they are taking responsibility for their sexuality.

> *"I think everyone should realize that we are responsible if we get a chance. I've been sexually active for 8 months. But before that, I found out about various birth control methods and STD's. We're not all running around sleeping with everyone in sight. I believe adults give us a lot less credit than we deserve for our sexuality. Their may be some irresponsible people out there, but then, that tells you they*

shouldn't be having sex. Abstinence is not right for everyone and I feel I'm getting the message that we should be abstain" (female, 16).

Moral judgments on sexual activity seem to be common. Communication is the key: schools and parents must work to provide straightforward information so that teens and their partners can engage in a meaningful dialogue.

- *"I think teenagers should feel free in talking to their parents about anything. Sex is not a bad thing unless you make it to be that way. I am not scared to ask for birth control or condoms because what counts the most is my future. Who cares about what people say. I judge myself extremely mature compared to most all my peers and I can control my thoughts and emotions. I shouldn't have to worry about things like that if I have my parents close to me and calm about what I think and feel. I value independence with out it I could be manipulated by anyone. I'm not going to depend on everyone else to make up my decisions. Because when it all comes down to it, I'm the one I look out for" (female, 14).*
- *"Don't tell teenagers not to do it or its OK to do it. Just let them know you will always love them and have the subject about sexuality more*

> *open. it's not a disease, its human nature" (female, 15).*

While the maturity of these two students about sex is impressive, the majority of teens are not, considering the number of teen pregnancies and STDs that abound.

Many students commented on how teenagers are starting their sexual activity at too young an age. This parallels the findings in this study and most of the current research. The comments came from both abstainers and the sexually active. The not sexually active seem to address the topic in a more self-righteous manner: that those who are having sex at a young age are just thoughtless. The sexually active students approached it in a different manner: as a regret for their own early sexual activity.

> *"I strongly believe sex should not be practiced until marriage or until both partners are in a loving, serious relationship and both committed to each other. I feel dating and sexual relations happen too early in a person's life. AIDS, STD's and pregnancy are serious consequences and teens should realize this. I have paid the price of having sex too early, as I got pregnant. I believed I was in a serious relationship, but I was wrong as my boyfriend left me when he found out I was pregnant. As much as I love my son, I regret getting pregnant so early in my life.*

> *I wish I would've waited. I wish all other teens wait as well*" (female, 17).

This student's experience helps this researcher to humanize research findings and provides a clear example for other students.

Why are students beginning sexual activity at younger ages? While not one student addressed this question directly, some offered clues by talking about the pressures to be sexually active. As aforementioned, peer pressure, or the perception of peer pressure, is very real for some adolescents. While there are pressures to become sexually active (or not), there are also broader pressures and expectations inflicted on the relationships. Friends and school mates, both implicitly and explicitly, send signals as to who is appropriate to date and what behaviors (sexual and otherwise) are acceptable. In some cliques, it is not enough that the potential partner is a good person or fun to be with; he or she must clearly meet certain standards, be it athletic or stylish. This may lead to teens feeling insecure with themselves and their choice in partner. This student spoke about the problem when her potential date's friends disapproved. *"Well, when a girl likes a boy and they want to go steady. But the boy's friends doesn't like the girl so he says no but he likes you. Peer pressure...."*

(female, 15).

Besides peer pressure, there are the societal images that portray sex as a necessary, frustrating and ultimately worthwhile past-time. Many teen movies, such as *Fast Times at Ridgemount High* and *16 Candles*, portray sex as a rite of passage: the entrance to adulthood and/or popularity. This student commented on the media's role in the personal fable. *" I blame TV, movies and the media for most of the teenage pregnancies or pressure just to have sex. They fill us with false illusions about sex, that it is OK for one night stands, having sex with out protection or the idea, 'It can't happen to me'"* (male, 17). Since adolescence is a notoriously egocentric time, it is counterproductive that the media provide unrealistic images of youth, propagating the "I am so unique, this does not apply to me" personal fable. Movie teens rarely become pregnant or contract an STD unless that is the central theme of the movie. Sex has consequences and students must be made aware of and be prepared to handle all the nuances that surround it.

Last, many students had specific recommendations for this researcher and for school staff and parents. They provide real feedback to better address their concerns.

For school administrators:

- *"People complain about teen pregnancies being a burden on tax-payers money. Wouldn't it be cheaper to make sure people are equipped with condoms. Teens are afraid to buy them. So there should be a place you are able to buy them in privacy" (male, 16).*
- *"Condoms in the school. Benefit all. I don't think it leads to more people having sex -- in a high school, people are more mature, usually, and besides, at least they're using birth control. If people want to have sex, they'll do it, a condom machine isn't going to force anyone to do anything anymore than learning about condoms in a health class" (female, 17).*
- *"If you want to put something different into CALM class, or just general knowledge, put in information about gay and lesbian relations or even bi-sexual. Like, if your mother was a lesbian, does that make you one?* (female, 17)

For teachers, youth workers and parents:

- *"I find it hard to talk to my girlfriend's parents. They don't seem to trust me, and I find it hard to impress them. We never hear how to earn the* *trust of parents and it's really tough!" (male, 15)*

- *"I think there should be a self defense program for girls against men because many girls have gotten raped and if they knew self defense that wouldn't have happened as much. If I would have known self defense it wouldn't have happened to me" (female, 14).*

For researchers:

- *"You should have had a question asking how we felt, after reflection on having sexual intercourse after many months had past, once you had broken up with your partner. This would have indicated whether or not teenagers who have done it regret it or not" (female, 17).*
- *"In Part 2 you ask what we expect people to do at certain stages of dating. I think a more proper question would be what we feel is right. I don't expect anything, I don't care what others do to their bodies cause there is nothing I can do to change it" (female, 17).*
- *"I think some of the percentages (like 70% of all teens are having sex) really doesn't make sense. If I'm the left over 30% then what is that supposed to say to me, that I should have sex because 70% is? I know that's not right but I think some people would take it that way" (female, 15).*

5. What is the profile of a typical teenager in a rural community?

The average teenager in rural Alberta seems to get along with his or her parent(s), may not attend church but professes to adhere to a set of values, usually thinks school is “okay”, plans to attend a post-secondary institution, parties on the week-end and partakes in both group and male or female relationships. The students in this community reported that approximately 80% of these teenagers drink alcohol, 35% use illegal drugs, and 45% are having sexual intercourse.

Implications For Further Study

Overall, this study provided some preliminary sexuality data on rural Albertan adolescents. The next logical step will to be to expand the research, in the hope that more teenagers will be forthcoming to help understand their decision making processes in the area of sex, which is the ultimate goal. This includes using random interviews with students as a follow-up to the questionnaire and working with the teachers teaching sexuality to better understand the adolescents' learning environment. The sample must be enlarged. This researcher hopes to gather data in an urban and far-northern rural community so that conclusions can be made with confidence about Albertan teens. Researchers in other countries have also expressed interest in replicating the study for a cross-cultural comparison.

However, as any researcher in social sciences can attest, no study is perfect. One over-riding concern was the validity of the data. It is worrisome that teens will not be as candid about behaviors that are socially undesirable or some teens may exaggerate their involvement. Alexander, Somerfield, Ensminger, Johnson, and Kim (1993) investigated the problem of adolescent self-reports and came to the following conclusions.

> Our data showed clear developmental differences in the accuracy of self-reported sexual behaviors. This suggests that it may be more profitable in terms of data quality to begin asking students about their sexual behavior when they are in high school as opposed to middle school (p.479).

Following their suggestion, the majority of the students were in high school (with the exception of grade 9 students). As well, by the discretion of the researcher, surveys were removed from data analysis as the answers were obviously fictitious.

Survey Critique

Since the vast majority of data used in this thesis was gathered by a detailed survey, any or all of the problems were in the survey questions. The following is a detailed critique of some of the difficulties that were encountered.

The question inquiring about cultural background (Part 1 - #4) was not clear to the students. The options offered were "European, Native or Other" since the first two categories covered the vast majority of the student's original ancestry. However, it become quickly apparent that some students did not know what "European" meant. Since there was a space to specify, it helped somewhat in classifying. For example, a student may check "Other" but than specify as Irish. Secondly, some students wrote "Canadian" which could only be coded as "Other" since assumptions about their background could not be made. Lastly, since there was an Native reserve near the community, there were a number of Metis students that were difficult to code. The only category that could be used was "Other". When next revising the survey, this question would be entirely revised to inquire about ancestry rather than cultural background, and more options would be given so that the "Other" category would be used less frequently.

There was also some problems with the answers to question #6 in Part 1. The question inquired whether the student considered himself or herself religious. The continuum of answers compared oneself to others: not at all, less religious than most teens my age, more religious than most teens my age, yes, very. However, it was immediately apparent that the obvious was omitted: about the same as my peers. Thus, those that felt that way included it in the "Other" category. Frequently students also used the "other" category to talk about being spiritual, but not traditionally religious. The word religious seems to connote traditional institutions.

Question 9 in Part 1 was also misconstrued, especially in this rural sample. It asked whether the teen had access to a vehicle to drive. The answers were as follows: I am not old enough to drive, yes, no and sometimes. However, in most rural communities, some teens learn to drive at a young age, particularly on farms. (This was the case in my own background as I learned to drive by the age of ten in my parent's fields). So some students indicated "yes" or "sometimes" even though they were not legally old enough to drive. It was time consuming to cross reference with ages.

The most unsatisfying question was undoubtedly question 11, in Part 1. The students had no problems answering it, however it was poorly operationalized. Asking the students whether their parents were very strict,

strict or not very strict allowed each student too much freedom to construe their own basis of what "strictness" meant. Having a midnight curfew may be very strict to one student or not very strict to another student. The following restructured question better defines what is meant by strictness for the students:

Which best describes how decisions are made in your family

(1) My parent(s) let me do what I want

(2) We make decisions together about curfews, dating rules etc.

(3) I discuss issues with my parent(s) but they still have the final word.

(4) My parent(s) dictate what I can do, when I go out, who I see etc.

By describing specific behaviors, all students are working from the same frame of reference.

The last question that needs to be revised was question 12 in Part 4. It did not allow for students to choose more than one method of birth control, although, as it turned out, many circled more than one answer. It should be clarified that students can circle as many as applied.

Research Suggestions

By reviewing the comments and the literature, there are a few more issues that should be included in the next part of the research. First, a measure of the student's conservatism or liberalism will be added to the background questions in part 1. It will be interesting to compare that with sexual activity, use of birth control etc. While students with a more liberal attitude may be prone to having sex earlier and with more partners, it has been suggested in the United States that irregular or non-effective contraceptive use among teenage girls is associated with conservative or religious attitudes. This needs to be further explored here in Canada. Secondly, a question inquiring about a students' musical taste will be inserted. This may seem odd, given the topic is about sexual activity, not teenage music. However, several studies have shown a correlation between heavy metal music listeners and high risk-taking behavior. Frankly, this is also an area of interest to this researcher.

When reviewing the sexual activity data, several questions became apparent. If students are having intercourse at earlier ages, at what age are they beginning to date? How does the age of beginning to date compare to the age of first intercourse? How many partners to these students date compared to how many they have had sexual relations with? Sexual activity is very often (but not always) a part of a dating relationship so the connection between the two must be better understood. Often, the two are investigated mutually exclusively, leaving questions as to the presence of mediator and moderator variables. And, as always in correlational studies, relationships are apparent but causation is not possible. Does increased drug usage cause increased sexual activity or vice versa? The answer to that question is impossible to confirm. But, it is the hope of this researcher that as variables and relationships become more clearly defined, conclusions can be made with more confidence. It is with this direction in mind that the adolescent decision making processes with regards to sexuality, can be better understood.

Final Thoughts

Personally, the most satisfying comment in the entire research process came from an 15 year old female: *"I feel that this survey was very interesting. It helped me realize who I really am when I'm not around my friends."* As a researcher in adolescent sexuality, it is my hope that as I learn from them, students may also gain some self-awareness as they probe their own opinions, attitudes and behaviors.

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Instrument

Adolescent Sexuality Survey

Questionnaire

Introduction and Directions

This questionnaire is completely **anonymous** and **voluntary**. We are interested in your dating experiences as well as your impressions of the dating habits of other teens. **We really want honest answers to the questions, but please feel free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer.** Your participation in this survey will help us better understand the dating trends of today's teenagers, and will help us make the CALM course more relevant to teenagers' needs. Thank you for your participation.

Part 1 - Background Information

1. What is your sex (gender)?
   (1) male (2) female

2. What is your age?
   (1) 14
   (2) 15
   (3) 16
   (4) 17
   (5) 18
   (6) 19 or older

3. What grade are you in?
   (1) 10 (2) 11 (3) 12

4. What is your cultural background?
   (1) European Please specify: ____________________________
   (2) Native
   (3) Other

5. Please indicate the statement about religion which best describes you.
   (1) I never go to church
   (2) I rarely go to church
   (3) I sometimes go to church, but not regularly
   (4) I regularly go to church, usually once a week
   (5) I regularly go to church, and am involved in religious activities during the week as well

6. Do you consider yourself religious?
   (1) Not at all
   (2) Less religious than most teens my age
   (3) More religious than most teens my age
   (4) Yes, very
   (5) other ____(write in)

7. Please mark the statement which, in your opinion, best describes your physical appearance.

(1) I do not consider myself attractive to others.
(2) I am not really attractive, but I do have some nice features.
(3) I think that I am average in attractiveness.
(4) I think I am more attractive than others.
(5) I consider myself one of the most attractive people in my school.
(6) other ______________________________(write in)

8. Where do you live?

(1) in a city   (3) on a reserve   (5) Other __________
(2) on an acreage   (4) on a farm

9. Do you have access to a vehicle to drive, either your own or your parents?

(1) I am not old enough to drive
(2) yes
(3) no
(4) sometimes

10. Please mark the statement which best describes your parents/guardians:

(1) I live with both of my biological parents.
(2) I live with my mother who is a single parent.
(3) I live with my father who is a single parent.
(4) I live with my mother and a step father.
(5) I live with my father and a step mother.
(6) other ____________________________________(write in)

11. Please mark the statement which best describes the parents or guardians you are currently living with:.

(1) My parents/guardians are very strict
(2) My parents/guardians are strict.
(3) My parents/guardians are not very strict.

12. Please mark the statement which best describes the parents or guardians you are currently living with.

(1) I have a good relationship with both my parents/guardians,

(or with one parent if living with a single parent)
(2) I get along with my mother/stepmother, but not with my father/stepfather
(3) I get along with my father/stepfather, but not with my mother/stepmother
(4) I do not have a good relationship with either of my parents/guardians, (or one parent if living with a single parent)

13. Have you ever talked to your parents about sex?
    (1) yes, a great deal
    (2) yes, a bit
    (3) no, not at all

14. Do you like school?
    (1) I love school
    (2) I like school more than most of my friends
    (3) It's OK (average)
    (4) I don't like school very much
    (5) I hate school
    (6) other________________________________(write in)

15. Do you participate in extra-curricular activities?
    (1) Yes, as much as I can
    (2) Yes, a little
    (3) I don't participate in extra-curricular activities.

16. Do you have chores to do after school?
    (1) Yes, I have regular chores to do after school
    (2) Yes, I sometimes have chores to do but not every day
    (3) No, I don't have chores to do after school

17. Do you have a job after school?
    (1) Yes, I have a regular paid job
    (2) I sometimes do odd jobs for money but nothing regular
    (3) I do not have any job for money

18. How many hours per week, on average, do you work during the school year?

(1) I do not have a job
(2) 1 to 5 hours
(3) 6 to 10 hours
(4) 11 to 15 hours
(5) more than 15 hours

19. How much time, on average, do you spend doing homework each week?

(1) None
(2) less than one hour
(3) 1-2 hours
(4) 3 - 5 hours
(5) more than 5 hours

20. How much time, on average, do you spend studying each week?

(1) None
(2) less than one hour
(3) 1-2 hours
(4) 3 - 5 hours
(5) more than 5 hours

21. What are your plans immediately after completing high school?

(1) continue my education at a university.
(2) continue my education at a college with the intention of transferring to a university after one or two years.
(3) continue my education at a college (e.g.. NAIT, Grant McEwan)
(4) to get a job
(5) to travel
(6) I don't know yet.
(7) other ______________________________ (write in)

22. What career, or job, do you intend to pursue when you finish your education?

(1) ______________________________ (write in)
(2) I don't know yet

23. What is your approximate grade average in school?

(1) less than 40%
(2) 40 - 50%
(3) 50 - 65%
(4) 65-80%
(5) 80 to 100%

24. Which statement best describes your use of tobacco?
    (1) I never have used any tobacco products.
    (2) I have rarely smoked or chewed tobacco
    (3) I am an occasional smoker (or chewer) of tobacco
    (4) I used to use tobacco products, but have quit.
    (5) I smoke (or chew) tobacco regularly.

25. Which statement best describes your use of alcohol?
    (1) I never drink alcoholic beverages
    (2) I used to drink alcohol, but I have quit
    (3) I occasionally drink alcoholic beverages.
    (4) I drink alcohol regularly, but don't usually get drunk.
    (5) I drink alcohol regularly, and often get drunk.

26. How many alcoholic drinks would you have in an average week?
    (1) I don't drink alcoholic beverages.
    (2) 1-3 drinks / week
    (3) 4-6 drinks / week
    (4) 7-10 drinks / week
    (5) more than 10 drinks / week

27. When do you drink alcoholic beverages? (You may choose more than one).
    (1) I don't drink alcoholic beverages.
    (2) only at family functions
    (3) only at parties on the weekends
    (4) only on weekends
    (5) sometimes during the week, as well as weekends
    (6) I drink alcoholic beverages during the week and at weekends

28. Have you ever used illegal, drugs?
    (1) never
    (2) only a few times (less than 5)
    (3) occasionally (less than 10)
    (4) frequently

29. Have you ever used prescription drugs or "over the counter " drugs, for recreational (non-medical) reasons?

(1) never
(2) only a few times
(3) occasionally
(4) frequently

Thank you. Please go on to Part 2.

Part 2 - Peer-Expected Dating Behaviors

This part of the questionnaire asks you to think about the **majority** of the teens in your school, and to **predict what you think** most of them would do while on a date.

To help you with this portion of the survey, a brief definition of the terms used has been given below:

-date: when a boy and a girl plan to meet alone or in a group at some place at some time
-going steady: going out with only one person, in a mutually exclusive relationship
-kissing: casual kissing, once or twice on a date
-necking: more prolonged kissing, with cuddling and stroking of the hair and face
-light petting: fondling of the body with the hands
-heavy petting: prolonged fondling, often with the removal of clothing
-sexual intercourse: full sexual relations (go all the way)

1. Two people like each other, and are on a **first date**:

If two people who liked each other were on a first date, would you expect them to. . .

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

2. Two people who have **gone out several times**:

If two people have gone out several times as a couple, would you expect them to . . .

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

3. A couple that is **going steady**:

If a couple were going steady, would you expect them to . . .

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

4. A couple that is in a **serious, committed relationship**:

If a couple were seriously thinking about marriage, or were in a deep, committed relationship, would you expect them to . . .

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

Thank you. Now go on to Part 3

Part 3 - Actual Dating Behaviors

These questions are intended to gather information about behaviours of young Canadians while on dates. We are interested in **your** experiences. Please give us your honest answers. **Again, you may leave out any question(s) which you feel you would rather not answer**.

To assist you with this portion of the survey, a brief definition of the terms used has been given below:

-date: when a boy and a girl plan to meet alone or in a group at some place at some time
-going steady: going out with only one individual, in a mutually exclusive relationship
-kissing: casual kissing, once or twice on a date
-necking: more prolonged kissing, with cuddling and stroking of the hair and face
-light petting: fondling of the body with the hands
-heavy petting: prolonged fondling often with the removal of clothes
-sexual intercourse: full sexual relations (penetration) .... usually called "going all the way

I. While on a **first date** with someone:

1. Have you ever been on a date with a person of the opposite sex? (See definition of "date" above).
(1) yes (2) no

2. How many different people of the opposite sex have you ever dated?
(1) I have never been on a date
(2) I have only dated one person
(3) I have dated a few people (up to 5)
(4) I have dated more than 5 people

3. On any of the first dates with someone you liked did you ever?

(choose YES, NO or NOT SURE for ALL 6 categories OR check #7)

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3
(7) I have never been on a date			

II.. After **going out several times** with one person:

1. Have you ever had several dates with the same individual of the opposite sex?
   (1) yes (2) no

2. How many different people of the opposite sex have you ever had several dateswith?
   (1) I have never been on a date
   (2) I have only been on more than one date with one person
   (3) I have been on more than one date with several people (up to 5)
   (4) I have been on more than one date with more than 5 people

3. After several dates with the same person did you ever....?

(choose YES, NO or NOT SURE for ALL 6 categories OR check #7)

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3
(7) I have never had several dates			

III. While **going steady**:

1. Have you ever gone steady with a person of the opposite sex?
(1) yes (2) no

2. How many different people of the opposite sex have you ever gone steady with?
(1) I have never goon steady
(2) I have only gone steady with one person
(3) I have gone steady with several people (up to 5)
(4) I have gone steady with more than 5 people

3. While going steady with someone of the opposite sex did you ever?
(choose YES, NO or NOT SURE for ALL 6 categories OR check #7)

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3
(7) I have never gone steady			

IV. While in a **serious, committed relationship**:

1. Have you ever been in a serious, committed, loving relationship with a person of the opposite sex?
(1) yes (2) no

2. While in a serious, committed loving relationship with someone of the opposite sex did you ever?

(choose YES, NO or NOT SURE for ALL 6 categories OR check #7)

	yes	no	not sure
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

(7) I have never been in a serious, committed relationship

Thank you. Please go on to Part 4.

Part 4 - Sexual Attitudes and Behavior
The following questions deal with your sexual attitudes and behavior. (please remember that your answers are totally confidential and voluntary). **No one will ever know what your particular answer are to any of these questions.**. Again, feel free to leave out any questions which you would rather not answer.

1. Have you ever had sexual intercourse? (Going all the way... i.e.. with penetration)
    (1) yes (2) no

2. How many times have you had sexual intercourse?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) Once
    (3) 2 - 5 times
    (4) more than 5 times

3. With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) 1 partner
    (3) 2 -5 partners
    (4) more than 5 partners

4. How old were you when you first had sexual intercourse?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) 11 or younger
    (3) 12
    (4) 13
    (5) 14
    (6) 15
    (7) 16
    (8) 17
    (9) 18
    (10) 10 or older

5. How would you describe your condition when you first had sexual intercourse?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) sober
    (3) had a few drinks
    (4) drunk
    (5) stoned
    (6) I don't remember
    (7) other ______________________

6. Were you coerced (heavily persuaded) into having your first sexual intercourse?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) yes, I felt coerced. I did not really want to do it
    (3) no, I did not feel coerced. I was quite willing to have sex at that time.

7. Where did you have your first sexual intercourse?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) at home
    (3) at my partner's home
    (4) at someone else's home
    (5) in a vehicle
    (6) other ______________________________

8. Who initiated (wanted to have) sexual intercourse first?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) I did
    (3) my partner did
    (4) we both did
    (5) I don't remember

9. Did you discuss birth control with your partner before having intercourse?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) yes
    (3) no, but we talked about birth control after having intercourse
    (4) no, we have never talked about birth control, either before or after having intercourse

10. Who initiated the discussion (first brought up the subject) about birth control?
    (1) I have never had sexual intercourse
    (2) I did
    (3) my partner did
    (4) I have had sexual intercourse but I have never discussed birth control
    (5) I don't remember

11. Did you use any form of birth control when you had your first sexual experience?

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) yes
(3) no
(4) I don't remember
(5) I don't know

12. If you used a method of birth control, please identify the method used:

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) did not use birth control
(3) birth control pill
(4) withdrawal
(5) vaginal spermicides
(6) condom
(7) diaphragm
(8) others________________________
(write in)

13. If you did not use birth control, would you please explain why you chose not to

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) I just didn't think about it
(3) other ____
____

14. The following adjectives have been used by young people to describe their first sexual experience. Please check off the one(s) that you feel best describe your emotions about your first encounter with sex. Check as many as you feel best describe your emotions at that time.

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) guilty
(3) afraid
(4) raped
(5) anxious
(6) worried
(7) betrayed
(8) hurt
(9) wonderful
(10) stimulated
(11) loved
(12) mature, grown-up
(13) fulfilled
(14) excited
(15) superior
(16)other____________________________

15. Who influenced you to make your decision to have sexual intercourse? (please write a 1 beside the one who influenced you the most, a 2 beside the next and so on until you have ranked all those you feel have influenced you)

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
____(2) sexual partner
____(3) friends
____(4) mother
____(5) father
____(6) sibling(s) (brother or sister)
____(7) school classes (e.g.. CALM)
____(8) TV and/or movies
____(9) magazines or other print materials
____(10) other ______________________________ (write in)

16. Who influenced you to make your decision NOT to have sexual intercourse?
(please write a 1 beside the one who influenced you the most, a 2 beside the next and so on until you have ranked all those you feel have influenced you)

(1) I am sexually active
____(2) my partner
____(3) friends
____(4) mother
____(5) father
____(6) sibling(s) (brother or sister)
____(7) school classes (e.g.. CALM)
____(8) TV and/or movies
____(9) magazines or other print materials
____(10) doctor, nurse and/or health professionals
____(11) religious beliefs
____(12) concerns about STD's (sexually transmitted diseases)
____(13) concerns about HIV and AIDS
____(14) concerns about pregnancy
____(15) lack of opportunity
____(16) other ______________________________ (write in)

17. From whom have you received your knowledge about sex?
(please write a 1 beside the one which represents the person from whom you have received the most knowledge, a 2 next to the person from whom you have received the next most knowledge and so on OR check #8 if you feel that best describes your situation)

____(1) parent(s)
____(2) school classes (e.g.. CALM)
____(3) friends
____(4) sexual partner
____(5) TV and/or movies
____(6) magazines or other print materials
____(7) other ________________________________ (write in)
____(8) I know very little about sexual matters

18. Have you ever been pregnant?
(1) yes
(2) no
(3) irrelevant because I am male

19. Have you ever got a girl pregnant?
(1) yes
(2) no
(3) irrelevant because I am female

20. If you have been pregnant did you....
(1) I have never been pregnant
(2) keep the baby
(3) have an abortion
(4) give the baby up for adoption
(5) this question is not relevant to me because I am male
(6) other ____________________________ (write in)

21. If you have got a girl pregnant, did you....
    (1) I have never got a girl pregnant
    (2) decide with the girl to keep the baby
    (3) decide with the girl to have an abortion
    (4) decide with the girl to give the baby up for adoption
    (5) I was not part of the decision made
    (6) I did not agree with the decision made
    (7) this question is not relevant to me because I am female
    (8) other ________________________________ (write in)

Thank you. Please go on to Part 5 now.

Part 5 - Comments
The final say is yours. Please feel free to make any comments on these as well as any other issues you feel are important at this time.

Once again , please remember that your answers are completely confidential and voluntary. No one will ever know what your particular answers are to any of these questions. You may omit questions which you would rather not answer.

1. Explain what "going steady" means in your opinion in your school.

2. How long do you think a person should go with someone before becoming sexually active?

3. Do you now, or have you in the past, felt any pressure to become sexually active? (1) Yes (2) No

If you answered yes, from who or what do you feel pressure. You may identify more than one. (please do not use any names, just give the relationship e.g.. friend, mom, TV)

4. Do you now, or have you in the past, felt any pressure to abstain from sex, or to NOT become sexually active?
(1) Yes (2) No

If you answered yes, from who or what do you feel pressure. You may identify more than one.
(please do not use any names, just give the relationship e.g.. friend, mom, TV.)

5. Do you think it is realistic of educators and health officials, as well as parents, to expect teenagers to practice abstinence (to not have sex)?
(1) Yes (2) No
Please explain why or why not.

6. Please feel free to make any final comments you like about teenage dating behaviors, teenage sexual behaviors and/or anything you feel may be of benefit to the researchers about this topic.

Thank you for your participation.